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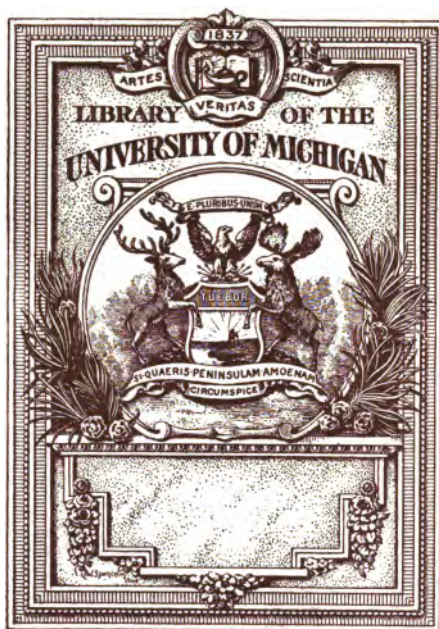
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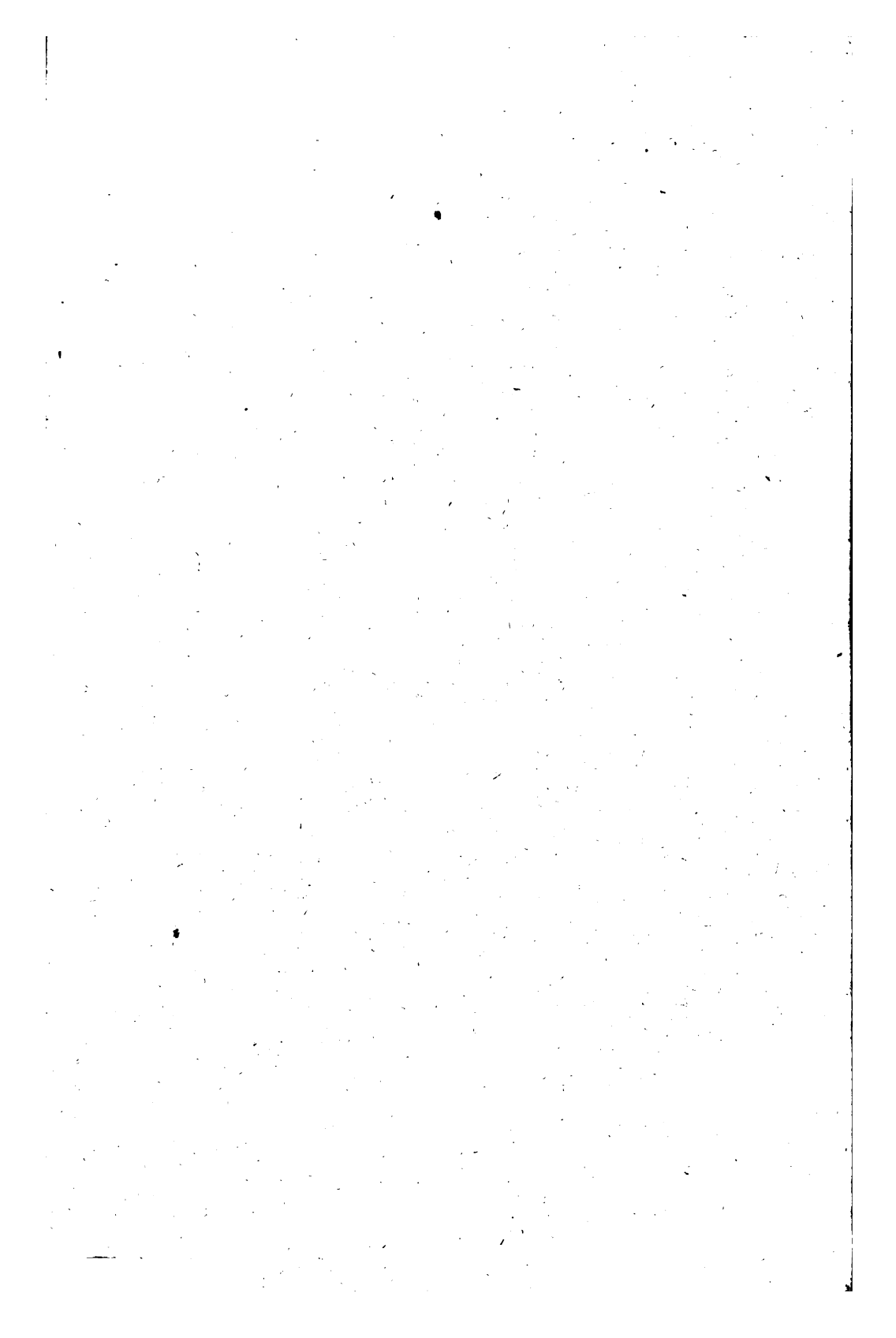
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THE DECLINE OF LANDOWNING FARMERS IN
ENGLAND.

BY
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PREFACE.

The materials which have been used in the preparation of this paper were collected some time ago when the writer had access to the collections of the British Museum and to the Library of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. At the same time materials were collected for a paper on the history of the relations between landlords and tenants in England, which will soon be ready for publication. These studies in the history of English land tenure were undertaken with the hope that from the experience of an older country we might find a clue to the correct understanding of the problems of tenancy and landownership in the United States. While the present paper and the one in preparation are incidental to the preparation of a monograph on tenancy and landownership in the United States, this last is only a part of a more comprehensive study in agricultural economics.

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THE DECLINE OF LANDOWNING FARMERS IN ENGLAND.

INTRODUCTION.

During the twenty years from 1880 to 1900 a significant decline in the percentage of landowning farmers took place in the United States. The facts of this decline are easily obtained;¹ the causes, however, are not so readily formulated. To analyze the forces which are tending to bring about a change in the organization of industrial society, and to observe with sufficient care the laws and customs and other conditions which retard or accelerate the operation of these forces, is a most difficult task. This work is facilitated, however, by studying similar conditions in other countries. Some countries having passed through more stages of economic development than others, it is possible to compare present conditions in a new country with the past of an older country, and thus bring some light to bear upon present day problems.

England offers excellent advantages to the student of historical and comparative agriculture. English agriculture has, perhaps, passed through more stages of economic development than that of any other country. Increasing intercourse with the outside world, and the accompanying changes in the organization of industrial society, have made it necessary for the English farmers of each succeeding generation to adapt themselves to new conditions. These economic changes have had a marked influence upon the relation of the farmers to the land which they cultivate. Two hundred years ago landownership on the part of farmers was common in England; but today it is rare. It has been attempted in this paper to bring together as much evidence as possible upon the conditions and forces which have resulted in this decline in the number of landowning farmers in England.

¹Twelfth Census, Vol. V., p. 689. Percentage of farms operated by owners in 1880, 74.5 per cent.; in 1890, 71.6 per cent.; in 1900, 64.7 per cent.

CHAPTER I.

LAND TENURE IN ENGLAND AT THE CLOSE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

The land of England was held by such varied tenures in the seventeenth century that in order to form a clear notion of the position of farmers, as landowners, at that time, it is necessary to classify those tillers of the soil in accordance with the ways in which they held the land they cultivated; and then to ascertain as nearly as possible the relative importance of each of these classes of farmers. In some parishes in England practically all of the farmers of the seventeenth century owned the land which they cultivated. As a general rule, however, there was a squire or a gentleman or a greater landlord, who owned a large share of the land of the parish and who held important rights in a great deal of the land which he did not own. A parish dominated in this way by a landlord was called a **MANOR** and the landlord was called "The lord of the manor."²

Of the land which was held in fee by the lord of the manor, a portion was kept as a "home farm" and managed by a "bailiff" or hired farmer. As a rule the remainder of the lord's demesne was leased to tenants who paid an annual or semi-annual rent for its use. The most important exception to this rule was found in the southwest of England where "conventional freeholds" or "life leaseholds" were common.

That portion of the land of the manor which was not held in fee by the lord, was owned and cultivated by small proprietors. Some of these small proprietors were *freeholders* and some were *copyholders*. There were two classes of freeholders, namely, freeholders of inheritance and freeholders not of inheritance.

²Laurence: *Duty of a Steward*, p. 59; Marshall: *Rural Economy of Yorkshire*, Vol. I, p. 19; Marshall: *Rural Economy of Suffolk*, Vol. I, p. 6; W. Mavor: *Agriculture of Berkshire*, p. 50.

Freeholders of inheritance were of two classes: fee-simple and fee-tail. Just how nearly this fee-simple freehold corresponds to the modern tenure designated by the same phrase it is not easy to determine. It is true that this tenure, sometimes at least, involved the payment of a small rent and the performance of some service. The fee-tail was a more limited estate in that the possessor of land under this tenure could neither alienate it nor determine its succession; and it may well be questioned if small proprietors held land under this tenure. Of the freeholds not of inheritance we are interested in the "conventional freeholds" which were created when a farmer paid perhaps two-thirds of its value for an estate in the land, which was to last so long as any one of three persons named in the agreement should live, after which the property was to revert to the original owner. But in order to keep this property from reverting to the original owner, it was common to put in a new life whenever one of the three lives came to an end. This was usually agreed to by the landlord upon the payment of a "fine." Farms held by this tenure were said to be "leased out on lives."

The copyhold estates were of two classes: Copyholds of inheritance and life copyholds. In general, a copyholder was one who held his lands in a manor, nominally at the will of the lord of the manor; but the will of the lord was often overruled by the customs of the manor so that he who held a copy of the court roll showing his right to certain lands had as secure a possession as a freeholder. The copyholders of inheritance could dispose of their lands by will, or sell to whomsoever they pleased, and the lord could in no way hinder the heirs or the purchasers from possessing the lands, so long as the customs of the manor were adhered to. The life copyholds were much like the freeholds for three lives, the most important difference being that the customs of the manor determined the character of the life copyhold tenures.³ The landlord was not obliged to renew a life copyhold, but usually did so upon the payment of an arbitrary fine. It was true of copyhold estates, in general, that "fines" were due the lord under whom they were held, whenever one tenant succeeded another, whether the change was due to alienation by sale, or to the death of the possessor. Upon the death of the lord or of the

³Blackstone: Bk. II., Chap. 9; Pollock, Land Laws, p. 44.

tenant "heriots" were taken out of the copyhold estate. There were other demands made by the lord upon his copyhold tenants but the fines and heriots were the most important.⁴

All tillers of the soil who held lands by any of these tenures which imply ownership, came to be called "yeomen" or "statesmen," in contradistinction to those who paid rent and who were called "farmers."⁵ At the present time, however, the former are called "yeomen farmers," the latter, "tenant farmers."

In order to appreciate the extent to which the yeomen farmers have declined in number and importance, it is necessary for us to ascertain as clearly as possible the position which they once occupied in English agriculture. It is not difficult to find statements, made by modern writers, to the effect that, two hundred years ago, more than half of the English farmers owned the lands which they cultivated.⁶ It is even stated that more than half were freeholders.⁷ On the other hand, another class of writers doubt whether the landowning farmers ever played an important part in English agriculture.⁸

So far as we can ascertain, all attempts at a definite statement as to the numbers of landowning farmers in England in the seventeenth century, are based upon the statistics compiled by Gregory King in his *Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions upon the State and Condition of England* (1696). King gives a "scheme" of the incomes of the several families of Eng-

⁴These heriots and fines were of considerable value. An example given by Laurance (*Duty of a Steward*, p. 140) shows that in 1725 John Todd succeeded his father in the possession of a copyhold of inheritance. A composition for the heriots "due to the lord of the manor at the death of the father" amounted to 56 pounds sterling, and John Todd paid a fine of 100 pounds sterling for "being admitted tenant to his father's estate."

⁵London: *Encyclopedia of Agriculture*, 1831, p. 1123. "*Yeomen farmers*, small proprietors who farm their own lands, but yet aspire not to the manners and habits of gentlemen." Again, in the glossarial index to the same: "A proprietor cultivating his own estate is not correctly speaking a farmer; to be such he must pay a rent." Pringle, *Agriculture of Westmoreland*, Chap. IV., Sec. 1, mentions "That numerous and respectable yeomanry . . . occupying estates of their own from 10 or 20 to £50 a year" and continues: "These men in contradistinction to farmers or those who hire the land they occupy, are usually denominated *statesmen*."

⁶G. Shaw-Lefevre: *Agrarian Tenures*, pp. 1, 2; E. Cathcart, J. R. A. S. E., Series III., Vol. II., p. 11; Macaulay: *History of England*, Vol. I., Chap. III.

⁷G. C. Broderick: *English Land and English Landlords*, p. 46.

⁸J. D. Rogers in *Palgrave's Dictionary of Political Economy*, Vol. III., p. 687. Also, Mr. Elliott, Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, gave this view in a private discussion of the subject with the writer.

land, calculated for the year 1688. Gregory King did not publish his "conclusions" but allowed Charles Davenant to use his manuscript. In 1699 the latter published King's statistical table, known as *A Scheme of the Income, etc.*, in his *Essay upon the probable methods of making a people gainers in the balance of trade*. About a hundred years later, George Chalmers published, from a manuscript copy in the British Museum, what purports to be the complete and unmodified work as King left it. The following table is a reproduction of parts of the "Scheme" as given in Chalmers' edition.

A SCHEME OF THE INCOME OF THE SEVERAL FAMILIES OF ENGLAND; CALCULATED FOR THE YEAR 1688.*

Number of Families.	Ranks, degrees, titles and qualifications.	Heads per Family.	YEARLY INCOME PER FAMILY.	
			£	s
160	Temporal Lords	40	2,800	.....
28	Spiritual Lords	20	1,300	.....
800	Baronets	16	840	.....
800	Knights	13	650	.....
8,000	Esquires	10	450	.....
12,000	Gentlemen	8	280	.....
5,000	Persons in Office	8	240	.....
5,000	Persons in Office	6	120	.....
2,000	Merchants and Traders by Sea	8	400	.....
8,000	Merchants and Traders by Land	6	200	.....
10,000	Persons in the Law	7	140	.....
2,000	Clergymen	6	60	.....
8,000	Clergymen	5	45	.....
40,000	Freeholders	7	84	.....
140,000	Freeholders	5	80	.....
150,000	Farmers	5	44	.....
16,000	Persons in Sciences and Liberal Arts	5	60	.....
40,000	Shopkeepers and Tradesmen	4½	45	.....
60,000	Artisans and Handicrafts	4	40	.....
5,000	Naval Officers	4	80	.....
4,000	Military Officers	4	60	.....
50,000	Common Seamen	3	20	.....
364,000	Laboring People and Out Servants	3¼	15	.....
400,000	Cottagers and Paupers	3¼	6	10
35,000	Common Soldiers	2	14	.....

Total number of Families, 1,360,536.

We are especially interested in the one hundred and eighty thousand "freeholders" and the one hundred and fifty thousand "farmers" given in this table. The "Scheme" as published by Davenant is made on the same plan, but the figures are not in

*Gregory King: *Political Observations and Conclusions*. Section VI. Chalmers's Edition, London, 1802.

every case the same. Davenant gives 40,000 and 120,000 respectively, for the two classes of "freeholders" and calls the first class, "Freeholders of the better sort," and the second class, "Freeholders of the lesser sort," whereas in the table, as given above, we find 140,000 freeholders of the second class. Again, Davenant gives the yearly income per family of the "better" freeholders at £91, and that of the "lesser" freeholders at £55, instead of £84 and £50, respectively, as given above.

The question arises as to which of these tables represents King's work. Davenant says, "Mr. King's modesty has been so far over-ruled as to suffer us to communicate these, his excellent computations, which we can the more safely commend, having examined them very carefully, tried them by some little operations of our own upon the same subject, and compared them with the schemes of other persons, who take pleasure in the like studies."⁹ Chalmers says that Davenant "made great use of these observations by publishing mutilated extracts from a consistent whole."

One gets no suggestion from Davenant that he has modified the figures, but the tradition has grown up that he thought King's figures for freeholders were too high, and reduced them twenty thousand.¹¹ This, however, is only a tradition. No evidence has been found which gives ground for its belief.

But another assumption may be made. It is possible that King found occasion to change the figures in his manuscript after Davenant had made use of it. King lived about thirteen years after the publication of the extracts from his work by Davenant, during which time he might, very naturally, be expected to find reason for modifying certain parts of his manuscript. Could it be shown

⁹ Political and Commercial Works, edited by Whitworth, 1771, Vol. II., p. 184.

¹⁰ Chalmers's Notice of the Life of Gregory King, p. 397, (1802 edition).

King's table is given opposite page 184.

¹¹ J. E. Thorold Rogers ("Agriculture and Prices," Volume V., p. 89, also, "Work and Wages," p. 463) seems never to have seen Chalmers's edition of the "Scheme," and takes for granted that the figures given by Davenant are King's figures. The same is true of John Rae (Contemporary Review, October, 1883). Macaulay evidently had both tables at his disposal for he quotes from Davenant's with the remark in a foot-note: "I have taken Davenant's estimate, which is a little lower than King's" (History of England, Vol. I., Chap. III). Toynbee follows Chalmers' edition in the text and says in the foot-note, "Macaulay, following Davenant, thinks this too high and puts them [the freeholders] at 160,000." ("The Industrial Revolution," p. 58). H. De B. Gibbons, in his "Industry in England," gets still farther away from the truth in a foot-note where he states, after giving 180,000 freeholders as King's statement, "Macaulay thinks this too high and suggests 160,000."

that Davenant found occasion to question King's figures and reduce the estimated number of freeholders this might be ground for accepting the more conservative estimate. On the other hand, in case King found his original figures too low and raised them, his final estimate should be counted more trustworthy.

Whatever may be the relative value of the two copies of the "Scheme," the more important question relates to the worth of King's work as a source of material for the writing of economic history. The popular writers pass this question over. But J. A. Hobson says: "King's calculations can only be regarded as roughly approximate."¹² J. D. Rogers says this work of King's "ought never to have been or to be quoted by social historians."¹³ J. E. T. Rogers values this work more highly, however; he says, "The calculations are, I am wholly persuaded, accurate, for Gregory King has rarely, even in modern times, been surpassed in the special and very exceptional power of understanding what is meant by statistical figures."¹⁴

In speaking of the yearly income per family, etc., as given in the "Scheme," Rogers writes: "The estimates are no doubt primarily gathered from the numerous direct taxes levied in the reign of Charles II."¹⁵ When one reads the Parliamentary Act¹⁶ in accordance with which these direct taxes were levied, and examines some of the old tax rolls which are now deposited in the Record Office in London, one is made to feel that this is a probable source of King's information. It should be noted, also, that the context shows clearly that he had these materials at hand.¹⁷ In general the internal evidence points to the conclusion that Gregory King drew upon all the best sources of information and that he was unusually careful in his use of the materials which were avail-

¹² Evolution of Modern Capitalism, p. 21.

¹³ Palgrave's Dictionary, Vol. III., p. 686. But as Mr. J. D. Rogers mentions the "New Domesday Book" of 1874 as a source on the subject of the yeomanry and does not include it in the list of works which should not be quoted by social historians, we have reason to doubt the value of his judgment on the worth of materials, for this "New Domesday Book" is recognized by such men as Major Craigie, Statistician of the Board of Agriculture, as being "very very unreliable."

¹⁴ J. E. T. Rogers: "Work and Wages," p. 465.

¹⁵ "Agriculture and Prices," Vol. V., p. 89.

¹⁶ See Scobell: "Parliamentary Acts, 1640-1656, Anno 1656, Cap. 12.

¹⁷ A statement in Section VII. of the *Political Conclusions* shows clearly that King used these tax rolls as a source of information; for he there compares the annual values of the land as rated for the 4 S. tax with what he reckons to be the true annual value.

able.¹⁸ We find no evidence that his contemporaries criticised the *Conclusions* of Gregory King; while, on the other hand, evidence of his popularity as an expert in "political arithmetic" is abundant.¹⁹ However we should not think of these figures as nearly so accurate as modern census statistics. They are, at best, "estimates," and given in round numbers. Yet there seems to be no good reason for rejecting these estimates as such. They present "such near approaches" to the truth, says King, "as the grounds we have to go upon will enable us to make."²⁰

Having accepted King's figures as approximately true we are next confronted with the problem of determining the meaning of the terms used.

King gives 180,000 "freeholders" and 150,000 "farmers," for

¹⁸In Section I. King states that "The ensuing treatise depends, chiefly, upon the knowledge of the true number of people in England, and such other circumstances relating thereunto, as have been collected from the assessments on marriages, births, and burials, parish registers, and other public accounts." In the preface mention is made of the great importance of being "well apprized of the true state and condition of a nation, especially in the two main articles, of its people, and wealth." And again, "but since the attainment thereof is next to impossible, we must content ourselves with such near approaches to it, as the grounds, we have to go upon, will enable us to make. However, if having better foundations than heretofore, for calculations of this kind, we have been enabled to come very near the truth: then, doubtless, the following observations and conclusions will be acceptable to those who have not entirely given up themselves to an implicit belief of popular falsehoods. But, the vanity of people in overvaluing their own strength, is so natural to all nations, as well as ours, that, as it has influenced all former calculations of this kind both at home and abroad, so if even these papers may be allowed not to have erred on that hand, I am of the opinion they will not be found to have erred on the other."

¹⁹"The gratitude of Davenant spoke of Gregory King, as a *jewel*, which was fit for any *statesman's cabinet*. This friendly intimation seems not to have been quite disregarded. The expenditure of the wars of William, and of Ann, required, that the public accounts should be stated. . . . This salutary measure was continued, at the commencement of the second of those hostile reigns. Gregory King acted as secretary to the comptrollers of army accounts; he continued, as secretary of the commissioners for stating the public accounts, to the day of his death." After this statement of the high position which King attained because of his superior capacity in the field of political arithmetic, Chalmers continues, "From the tendency of his genius, from the course of his life, from the nature of his employments; we may perceive how qualified he was to estimate the state of the nation." (Notice of the Life of Gregory King, pp. 400-401.) Again Chalmers says of King, "His original genius, his local knowledge, his scientific practice, qualified him, in a high degree, to carry this practical science of public business far beyond Sir William Petty, the original inventor of the art." (Ibid., p. 399.) "Gregory King . . . was a person of such powers, as to distinguish him, in an age, when eminent men, in his several accomplishments, abounded. He who surpassed Petty as a political calculator, must be allowed to have been a master of moral arithmetic." (Ibid., p. 403.)

²⁰Political Conclusions, Section I.

the year 1688. Nothing is said of copyholders, yet it is clear that he includes them under one of these headings. It is certainly a very loose use of the word freeholders that would make it include copyholders.²¹ And yet, if King meant by "freeholders," all those who were legally freeholders either of inheritance or for lives and no one else, then he must have considered all copyholders as "farmers." If this be true there could have been very few tenant farmers or even life copyholders for it is estimated that late in the sixteenth century one-third of the land in England was still copyhold of inheritance.²² But we have evidence that in 1725 tenant farmers were very numerous.²³

King's calculations were probably based upon the revenue returns, as the "pound rate" levied at various intervals²⁴ between 1656 and 1692 was assessed in such a manner as to give the basis for this calculation; for while every occupier of land was required to pay a rate on the annual value of the land which he occupied, arrangements were made so that all rent paying occupiers could deduct the tax from the rent which was due the lord.²⁵ The act regulating these assessments makes no other distinction among the occupiers of land, and as King was a surveyor and not a lawyer the probabilities are that he used the term "freeholder" to include all those who owned the land which they cultivated, and meant by "farmers" none but rack-rent tenants, that is, tenants who pay a rent equal to, or about equal to the annual value of the farms which they cultivate. Had he used *freeholder* in the legal sense it would have included the Lords, Baronets, Esquires, and

²¹ Another writer of the same period makes clear the distinction between freeholders and copyholders, but under freeholders includes only those of inheritance. G. M. The New State of England, pp. 223 to 229, Pt. II., London, 1691.

²² Pollock, p. 44. Based upon Coke; Meitzen, Siedelung und Agrarwesen, Vol. II., p. 139.

²³ In four manors noted by Laurence, Duty of a Steward, pp. 135 to 139, there were in all fifty-six tenants who apparently paid rents annually, to the annual value of the farms they occupied. Further, Laurence gives an abstract of covenants to be observed by all those tenants and publishes the same in his "Duty of a Steward" with the comment that "These covenants will prove of general use to most estates," which suggests that on "most estates" there was a considerable number of rent-paying tenants.

Again, the incomes of the various classes of landlords amounted to 6,285,000 annually, which we are to suppose came from the land. If each of the 150,000 farmers paid a rent equal to one-half the income accorded him by King it would leave 2,985,000 to be made out of *home farms*, courts, sale of timber, etc.

²⁴ Dowell: History of Taxation, Vol. III., p. 81.

²⁵ Scoble's Parliamentary Acts. Anno 1656, Cap. 12.

Gentlemen, who are given as separate classes. This suggests that King was using the term in a popular or loose way and certainly not in a strictly legal sense. And again, at that time the word "farmer," when applied to cultivators of the soil, meant a rent-paying tenant, and had the term been used to include all operators of farm land as the word is most commonly used in the United States today, it would have included the 180,000 "freeholders" given in King's "Scheme."^{26 27}

Thus from all the evidence which we are able to bring to bear upon the subject it would seem that the only tenable hypothesis is that King's division into "farmers" and "freeholders" was made upon an *economic* rather than a *legal* basis; and that under "farmers" he included what we now designate as tenant farmers, and under "freeholders" he included all landowning farmers.

Counting one "home-farm" for each greater landlord, esquire,

²⁶ Meltzen takes for granted that copyholders are included under "freeholders" in King's figures, but apparently counts the "life leaseholders" as "farmers." This interpretation leaves a larger number of freeholders of inheritance than if the life leaseholders were counted as freeholders, and thus seems to emphasize the importance of the landowning farmers. But Meltzen's interpretation is doubtless wrong for, in the south-west of England where these leaseholders were most common, they were rated under the property tax both as proprietors and occupiers, and it would have been difficult if not impossible for any one to have made a division on any other basis than that of rent-paying and non-rent-paying occupiers. (See Meltzen's *Siedelung und Agrarwesen*, Vol. II., pp. 139, 140. See also Worgan, *Agriculture of Cornwall*, Chap. II., Sec. I.)

²⁷ An example of the way in which these terms were used is found in Norden's "Surveyor's Dialogue" which was published in 1607. (Page 81 of the 1618 edition.) The text reads as follows: "Lord . . . as far as I can perceive, an observing and painful husband liveth, fareth, and thriveth as well upon his Farme of rack rent, as many doe that are called Freeholders, or that have leases of great value for small rent. *Surveyor*. There is some reason for it. . . . Some Freeholders and Lessees of great things of small rent, bring up their children too nicely," etc. The marginal index, parallel to the text, reads: "The reason why some Farmers live as well as some Freeholders." It is clear that the term *farmer* as used in the marginal index designates a man living upon "his Farm of rack rent" while *freeholder* as there used seems to designate freeholders proper as well as others that have "leases of great value for small rent." This shows clearly enough how the term *farmer* was used and certainly suggests that in brief statements and for general purposes the term *freeholder* was used in a loose way to include all the classes who by any form of tenure owned the land they cultivated. Yet we may be in danger of making too much out of this marginal index. It may be that the author thought it sufficient to mention one of a class, in the margin, and had no intention of using *freeholder* to include the others mentioned in the text. But regarding the usage of the term *farmer* there can be no doubt, and as King is using the two terms to include all the classes mentioned by Norden in the text, it would certainly be wrong to include under farmers others than "rack rent" tenants. Thus all copyholders and life leaseholders must fall into the only other class.

and gentleman, and one farm for each of King's "freeholders" and "farmers," there were in all 356,560 farms in England in 1688. Of these, 26,560 or seven and one-half per cent were "home farms," and, if our interpretation of King's figures is correct, 150,000 or forty-two per cent of the whole number of farms were occupied by tenant farmers, while the remaining 180,000 or fifty and one-half per cent, were owned and occupied by the various classes of freeholders and copyholders,—that is, by landowning farmers.²⁸

²⁸There were 380,179 farms in England in 1895. We know that much land has been brought into cultivation since 1688, and that the size of farms has increased.

CHAPTER II.

SOME EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TENDENCIES.

Before passing to the close of the eighteenth century, at which time it is possible to get a detailed view of the position of the land-owning farmers in the various counties of England, it may be well to note some of the tendencies in the agricultural developments of that century.

The names of Jethro Tull and Charles Townshend are associated with movements most significant in the history of English agriculture. These great agriculturists carried on their important experiments during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. With the name of Tull should be associated the word *tilth*; and the fact that his contemporary was called "Turnip Townshend" suggests at once the phase of agricultural improvement in which he was interested. Tull, in his *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*, emphasizes the importance of pulverizing the soil. "The chief art of husbandry is to feed plants to the best advantage," says Tull, and he believed that, in the feeding of plants, tillage is much more important than the application of fertilizers. He devotes one chapter of the book to the Pasture of Plants. In this chapter he emphasizes the importance of dividing the soil into fine particles in order that the plants may find "pasture" for their roots. The important field crops of the time were all sown broadcast, so that it was difficult, if not impossible, to cultivate the crops while growing, and the only chance of giving tilth to the soil was during the fallow year. To surmount this difficulty, Tull invented a drill, for the sowing of all kinds of grain and roots, in order that these crops could be cultivated between the rows while growing. He also invented a horse-hoe with which to cultivate the drilled crops.²⁹

²⁹Tull's *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*, the 1829 edition, with a preface by William Cobbett; Cathcart, Earl: Jethro Tull, his Life, Times, and Teaching, J. R. Agr. Soc., Eng., 3d Series, Vol. II., pp. 1-41.

The name of Townshend is most closely associated with the introduction of turnips and clover into England, and with the reorganization of the English field system. The introduction of turnips, which could be cultivated while growing much more satisfactorily than could the small grains, enabled the farmers to dispense with the fallow wherever this crop would thrive. As the production of a crop of roots did not require a great deal more labor than the caring for a bare fallow, it was only necessary that an increased demand for beef and mutton should increase the value of fodder crops sufficiently, in order that turnips should be very generally introduced. Upon the introduction of roots and clover, the old three-field system of crop rotation was replaced by the "Norfolk four course system," which consisted of a root crop, followed by spring grain with which clover and grass seeds were sown; and the third year the hay crop was removed in time to plow the land for sowing wheat or rye.³⁰

To the names of Tull and Townshend should be added that of Bakewell—the third member of the trinity of great men whose names have been most closely associated with "the new agriculture." Bakewell flourished at Dishley, in Leicestershire, from 1760 to 1795, and produced the necessary complement to good culture and fodder crops, namely, a breed of mutton-producing sheep and a breed of beef-producing cattle.³¹

This "new agriculture" is of interest here because it led to an increase in the size of farms,³² and to the enclosure of the common fields, both of which movements had a marked influence upon the status of the landowning farmers. In the agricultural literature

³⁰ Prothero, R. E.: *The Pioneers and Progress of English Farming*, Chap. IV.

³¹ Prothero, R. E.: *Ibid.*, Chapter V.; Housman, Wm., Robert Bakewell, J. R. Agr. Soc., Eng., 3d Series, Vol. V., pp. 1-31.

³² Hunter's *Georgical Essays*, Vol. II., pp. 201 to 204, by George Brown, "On the Size of Farms." "An improved system of husbandry requires that the farm upon which it is to be carried on should be of some extent, else room is not afforded for the different crops necessary to complete a perfect rotation of management. The farmer, who practices husbandry upon judicious principles, should not only have his fields under all sorts of grains, but likewise a sufficient quantity of grass and winter crops, for carrying on his stock of cattle and sheep through all the different seasons of the year. By laying out land in this style, the economy of a farm is soon regulated, that, while improvements progressively go forward, too much work does not occur at one time, nor occasion for idleness at another. This . . . cannot, in the nature of things, be justly and accurately arranged, when the farm is of small size. . . . Upon 50 acres, labor may not be afforded for half a team; the enclosures would perhaps be a few acres, and the farmer would go to market and buy a single beast, thereby affording

of the early part of the eighteenth century, one reads of the great benefits to be derivd from the enclosure of the common-fields for the purpose of adopting the new agriculture; and these enclosures often involved the buying out of small freeholders who held rights over the commons along with the lords of the manors. Laurence,³³ who wrote in 1727, taught with emphasis that "A Steward should not forget to make the best enquiry into the disposition of any of the freeholders within or near any of his lord's manors to sell their lands, that he may use his best endeavors to purchase them at as reasonable a price as may be for his lord's advantage and convenience. Some instances there have been of stewards, who, after they have made haste to be rich, have made these enquiries for their own sakes, and have purchased out the freeholders, thereby making an estate for themselves, even within their own lord's manors; insomuch that sometimes I have known it so ordered that the lord's tenants have been called to do suit and service at his own [the steward's] court. But, for the sake of honour and honesty, I hope these instances are rare; and so I content myself to have given this hint, still persuading the vigilant steward to be zealous, for his lord's sake, in purchasing all the freeholders out as soon as possible especially in manors where improvements are to be made by *inclosing* commons and common-fields; which (as everyone, who is acquainted with the late improvement in agriculture, must know) is not a little advantageous to the nation in general, as well as highly profitable to the Undertaker."³⁴

opportunity for spending half the year in idleness, wasting the ground by a number of fences, and occasioning more expense than the whole profit would repay.

"Besides, an improved system of husbandry requires the farmer should be possessed of an adequate stock, a thing in which small farmers are generally deficient. It is an old proverb, the truth of which I have too often seen exemplified, 'that the poor farmer is always a bad one.' Allowing he has knowledge, he cannot reduce it to practice, for want of the necessary means.

"With regard to the question, whether large or small farms are generally best managed? I apprehend very few words will suffice. Who keeps good horses, and feeds them well? Who makes the completest fallow, takes the deepest furrows, and ploughs best? Who has the greatest number of hands, and sufficient strength for catching the proper season, by which the crop upon the best of grounds is often regulated? Who purchases the most manure, and raises the weightliest crops? I believe, in general, these questions must be answered in favor of the large farmer. If so, it follows that the prevalence of small farms retards improvement."

³³Duty of a Steward, p. 36 *et seq.*

³⁴It should be noted that in urging the steward to buy up the small freeholds,

The writer has not found evidence showing any great progress in this direction until later in the eighteenth century, but there is reason for believing that Laurence's advice was acted upon many times during the next sixty years.⁸⁵ In 1786, Marshall records in detail an inclosure where the proceedings seem to have been in exact accordance with this advice.⁸⁶

Contemporaneous with the new agriculture, and perhaps it is not too much to say making the new agriculture necessary and possible, was the enormous growth of English manufactures and commerce. These lines of development greatly increased the demand for agricultural products so that by the end of the eighteenth century the price of such products had greatly risen. The high prices which could be obtained for the products of the farm gave high values to land and made larger farms and intensive culture extremely profitable. It required a great deal of capital to stock a large farm and cultivate it in accordance with the new methods. To own both land and capital required relatively great wealth; and the rural economists of the time advised farmers to use their capital in stocking large farms rather than to invest nearly all they had in buying land, in which case the

economic and not political reasons are given by Laurence. Toynbee quotes Laurence but does not go far enough to bring out this fact.

Cunningham and Toynbee used to discuss this subject when together. Toynbee claimed that the motive which led to the buying out of the freeholders was desire for political power and social prestige. (See "The Industrial Revolution," pp. 63, 64.) Cunningham claimed that the motive was economic and not political. (See "English Industry and Commerce—Modern Times," Section 282.)

⁸⁵Marshall: *Rural Economy of Norfolk*, Vol. I., p. 6; Vol. II., p. 365; *Rural Economy of Yorkshire*, Vol. I., p. 50.

⁸⁶In the parish of Felbrigg, in Norfolk, "some seven or eight years ago, Mr. Wyndham, who is Lord of the Manor, was also the sole proprietor in this parish, excepting one small farm, of seventy pounds a year, belonging to a young man, a yeoman, just come of age. An extensive, heathy waste, and some common-field lands, were desirable objects of inclosures; consequently, the possession of this young man's estate became an object of importance to Mr. Wyndham. Steps were accordingly taken towards obtaining the desired possession; not, however, by threats and subterfuges, too commonly but very impolitically made use of upon such occasions; but by open and liberal proposals to the young man, the joint proprietor; who was made fully acquainted with the intention; and frankly told that nothing could be done without his estate. He was, therefore, offered, at once, a specific and considerable sum, over and above its full value to any other person; and, to ensure the object in view, he had, at the same time, an offer made him of a considerable farm, on advantageous terms. The young man being enterprising, and his little estate being, I believe, somewhat encumbered, accepted the offer, sold his estate, and agreed for a farm, consisting partly of old inclosure, in part of common-field land, and in a still greater proportion of the heath to be inclosed."—*Rural Economy of Norfolk*, Vol. II., p. 365.

farms would be too small and too poorly stocked to be most profitable. It came to be the argument that, whereas a farmer could realize no more than three per cent on investments in land, he could make a profit of ten per cent by using it in stocking a farm.⁵⁷

The manufacturing industries did not simply expand during this period, they changed their form of organization; and this change in organization had an important influence upon the small farmers of England. As the factory system became established, the domestic system of manufacturing was no longer profitable, and the small farmers who had depended upon spinning and weaving for a part of their income were deprived of this means

⁵⁷James Anderson is the author of a short article published in Hunter's *Georgical Essays*, Vol. VI., p. 213, (York, 1804), which is entitled, "The Bad Consequence of a Farmer Lessening his Capital by the Purchase of Land." The article reads as follows: "Those who are fond of political calculations may have here full scope for their ingenuity, by supposing that two men of equal spirit, knowledge, and capital, set out in the agricultural line. One of them as a farmer, on a lease; and the other as a small proprietor, or yeoman. Let the capital be taken any how at random; say, £2000. The yeoman, we shall say, lays out £1500 of that sum in the purchase of a farm, which at thirty years' purchase [that is, thirty times the annual rent or annual value], would be worth £50 a year, and he has 500 left for stocking and improving it. The other leases a farm, which, at a fair rent, is worth 200 a year. Let us follow out the calculation,—first, in regard to the profits that the different occupiers themselves can enjoy, and the rate at which their families can afford to live; and, second, with regard to the augmentation of agricultural produce that each of them could afford to the state; and let this calculation be continued for a considerable number of years. Then strike the balance, and see what an amazing difference!"

Again, in recent times when the subject of restoring the old order of yeoman farmers was being agitated, James Caird (*J. R. Agr. S. E.*, Series III., Vol. I., p. 27) gives a very clear statement of the problem suggested by James Anderson three-quarters of a century earlier. Caird writes: "There are two capitals employed in British agriculture; that of the landowners and that of the farmer. The first, which is the land itself, and the permanent improvements upon it, had hitherto been certain and safe, and, therefore, yielding a small, but regular, return; the other, the livestock and crops, subject to risk of seasons, and speculations, and liable to compensation prices, requiring a much larger percentage to cover risk. The capitalist is content with 3 per cent for his heretofore secure investment, which carried with it also influence and social position. A farm worth £50 an acre for the freehold needs a further capital of £10 an acre to provide the farmer's capital for its cultivation. The landowner is satisfied with a return of 3 per cent on his £50, while the tenant looks for 10 per cent. for management and risk and interest on his £10. Let us suppose that the farmer has a capital sufficient to buy 100 acres at this price, and stock them; he would get for his £5,000, invested in freehold, £150, and for his £1,000, farm capital, £100; together, £250. But if he followed the custom of his country and used the whole of his capital in cultivating another man's land, he would with his £6,000 hire 600 acres, on which his returns ought to be £600. He, in truth, thus trades on the capital of the land owner, practically, let to him at the moderate rate of 3 per cent, which he converts into a trade profit on his own capital of 10 per cent.

of supplementing the returns of their small holdings. Some of these small farmer-manufacturers were absorbed by the large industries of the towns, others turned their entire attention to agriculture and became prosperous farmers, while others were reduced, in time, to the ranks of the agricultural laborers.

But these are not the only ways in which the growth of manufactures and commerce influenced rural affairs. Many who had made their fortunes in manufactures or in commerce, desired to own country homes. These country homes often consisted of very small areas with villas built upon them, but more commonly, owing to an "inordinate desire" to be connected with the new agriculture, the wealthy merchants and manufacturers purchased farms and operated them, not for profit, but for pleasure.

While farming for pleasure led to the buying out of many landowning farmers in the vicinity of the large centers of wealth, this was of less permanent significance than the fact that many of the men who had acquired wealth wished also to acquire social and political position; and this could be done most readily by becoming great landlords. This led many of the new men of wealth to buy land and establish their families upon large estates. In these various ways the reorganization of industry in England at the close of the eighteenth century tended to reduce the number of farmers who owned the land which they cultivated, and to increase the numbers of great landlords and of tenant farmers.

CHAPTER III.

THE LANDOWNING FARMERS IN ENGLAND AT THE CLOSE
OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

There is a great abundance of material relating to the condition of the landowning farmers in England at the close of the eighteenth century. Marshall's well known treatises on *Rural Economy*, consisting of separate two volume works on various districts, were followed, in 1794, by an agricultural survey, made under the direction of the Board of Agriculture, which covered every county of Great Britain. The reports of those who made this survey were corrected, rewritten and republished, county by county, during the next ten or fifteen years. In their final form these reports give a well systematized description of English agriculture as it was at the close of the eighteenth century. The present chapter is based principally upon these two collections of material.

While the material is plentiful, it is not entirely satisfactory; yet any one willing to read the necessary mass of details may gain a very good idea of the subject from these sources. With such a mass of details to deal with, it is difficult to decide upon a method of presentation. It will be necessary to use the exact language of the sources in many cases. Quotations often make it necessary to include much that is not important, however, and to avoid this the system of paraphrasing will frequently be resorted to.

The material in hand shows a distinct decline in the number of landowning farmers in some parts of England, a replacement of the old yeomen farmers by successful business men in other parts, while the position of this class of farmers, throughout the greater part of England, had, perhaps, not materially changed since the close of the seventeenth century.

SECTION I.

EVIDENCES OF DECAY.

Before the new agriculture was introduced there were many small owners in Norfolk who cultivated their own land. Instances are noted of parishes which had at one time been occupied entirely by this class of farmers. But by 1787 there had been a striking decline in the number of those belonging to this class. Marshall says that the small proprietors saw all about them tenant farmers, whom they had held as their inferiors, reaping great profits and rising to a degree of affluence superior to their own. The tenant farmers were able to live in a style too extravagant for the small proprietors, and this naturally made the latter dissatisfied with their position, "and either launched out into extravagance ill suited to their income, or *voluntarily* sold their comparatively small patrimonies, in order that they might, agreeably with the fashion or frenzy of the day become great farmers." The lands owned by these yeomen farmers fell into the hands of men of fortune and became united with their large estates.³⁸

It was remarked by Young³⁹ that in Hertfordshire the farmers scarcely ever invested in land. The suggested explanation being that these farmers were finding it more profitable to use their surplus funds in renting larger farms and cultivating their land more intensively rather than in buying land.

There never were many "small estates" on the wolds of the East riding of Yorkshire, and by the close of the eighteenth century there were still fewer than formerly. When the common fields were enclosed the larger proprietors very generally bought out the smaller ones, because the latter were unequal to the expense of an enclosure.⁴⁰

A "large proportion" of the county of Westmoreland was still possessed by "yeomen who occupied small Estates of their own from ten to fifty pounds a year," but this class of men was on the decline. "Turnpike roads," says Pringle, "have brought the

³⁸ Marshall: *Rural Economy of Norfolk*, Vol. I., pp. 6-7; also A. Young: *The Agr. of Norfolk*, Chap. II.

³⁹ *The Agr. of Herts*, C. II., S. I.

⁴⁰ H. E. Strickland: *The Agr. of the East Riding of Yorkshire*, C. II., S. I.

manners of the capital to this extremity of the kingdom. The simplicity of ancient times is gone. Fine clothes, better dwellings, and more expensive viands, are now sought after by all. This change of manners, combined with other circumstances which have taken place within the last forty years, has compelled many a *statesman* to sell his property, and reduced him to the necessity of working as a labourer in those fields, which perhaps he and his ancestors had for many generations cultivated as their own."⁴¹

SECTION II.

THE YEOMEN REPLACED BY GENTLEMEN FARMERS.

It has been noted that the great popularity of agriculture in England a hundred years ago, led many wealthy merchants to move into the country and become "Gentlemen farmers." To determine to what extent this movement influenced the character of landowning farmers, by substituting gentlemen farmers for yeomen,⁴² is the purpose of this section.

The number of landowning farmers was increasing in Middlesex. Many of them were not farmers by profession, however, but men who had made fortunes in London or elsewhere, and who had taken up farming for pleasure.⁴³

Property in Hertfordshire was much divided. The good roads, the balmy air, the beauty of the country, and its nearness to the capital are said to have made this county a favorite residence for the men of wealth who wished to move to the country for a part of the year. As a result "great numbers" had purchased land "for building villas."⁴⁴ This may account in part for the fact mentioned in the last section, that the Hertfordshire farmers had ceased to invest in land. Ordinary farmers cannot afford to pay an extra price for land because of good air and

⁴¹A. Pringle: *Agr. of Westmoreland*, Chap. II., Sec. I; Chap. IV., Sec. I.

⁴²"Yeoman farmers," says Lowdon (*Encyc. of Agr.*) "are small proprietors who farm their own lands, but yet aspire not to the manners and habits of gentlemen." While we mean by *gentlemen farmers* men who are independent and who farm primarily for pleasure, and who live in a style comparable to the Gentry and who do not associate with the "Working farmers."

⁴³J. Middleton: *Agriculture of Middlesex*, Chapters II. and IV.

⁴⁴A. Young: *Agriculture of Hertfordshire*, Chapter II., Section I.

beautiful surroundings, while these circumstances are of greater value than good soil to the gentlemen of leisure.

This same movement was going on to the south of London, in Surrey, where many large estates had been broken up into small holdings to supply the demands of the men of wealth who wished to have country homes.⁴⁵

In Lancashire the demand for landed property had been much on the increase for several years, owing to the fact that persons in trade were turning their attention to the cultivation of the soil, and owing to "a constant desire among the labouring classes of society to acquire small properties of this nature."⁴⁶

"There are a few counties," says Holland⁴⁷ "of equal extent with Cheshire, in which the number of wealthy landowners seems so considerable. . . . At the same time the number of smaller landowners is not apparently less than in other counties. The description of this latter class has however been very much altered of late years. From the advantages which have been derived from trade, and from the effects of the increase of taxes, which have prevented a man living with the same degree of comfort on the same portion of land he could formerly, many of the old owners have been induced to sell their estates, and new proprietors have spread themselves over the county, very different in their habits and prejudices. It may be doubted whether the change on the whole has been disadvantageous. Land, when transferred, is generally improved by its new possessor. With a new, and often a more enlightened view of its advantages and resources, he brings with him the means and the disposition to try experiments, and give to his new acquisition its greatest value. . . . He builds, drains, and plants; and by his spirit and example stimulates all around him to increased exertions."

The significance of this passage is rendered very clear by the footnote which was probably written by Sir John Sinclair.⁴⁸ The note is signed J. T. S. and reads as follows: "The loss of the old English Yeoman will nevertheless be regretted: his attachment to his home, and to the laws and religion of the country; his submission to government; his respect for all who were above

⁴⁵ Agriculture of Surrey, Chapter II., Section I.

⁴⁶ Dickson: Agriculture of Lancashire, C. II., S. I.

⁴⁷ Cheshire, Chap. II., sec. I.

⁴⁸ President of the Board of Agriculture, when the survey was made.

him, and affection for all who were below him, rendered him a most useful and valuable member of the community. He was a man contented with his situation, and anxious for the solid and permanent prosperity of the land in which he had been born and educated. He honoured antiquity of possession from principle, because he connected the permanence of families with the real welfare of the state; he encouraged the sentiment from prejudice, because it conferred honour on himself. He had his own pride of birth; and the property he had derived from ancestors he wished to leave unimpaired to posterity. But his pride never was, nor could be, offensive to the poor. He was too little raised above them for their envy, and they had always seen and known him what he was. He had been brought up amongst them, and on all occasions took part in their concerns. He was the link which connected the gentleman and the farmer; and as both were willing and desirous of associating with him on friendly terms, his existence gave a concord and harmony to society; created a common knowledge and interest in all that was passing; and blended into one whole the welfare of each respective neighborhood."

SECTION III.

THE POSITION OF THE YEOMAN FARMERS IN THE VARIOUS PARTS OF ENGLAND WHERE NO EVIDENCE OF THEIR DECLINE IS GIVEN.

While the yeomen had abandoned agriculture or become tenant farmers in some parts of England, and had been replaced by gentlemen farmers in other parts, no evidence has been found to indicate that the status of this ancient class of landowning farmers had materially changed throughout the greater part of the country by the close of the eighteenth century. By ascertaining the position of these small proprietors at the close of the eighteenth century, we shall be in a better position to appreciate the significance of the decline in the numbers of this class during the nineteenth century.

The county of Cumberland had long been noted for its yeomen farmers, or *statesmen*, as they are called locally. There were said to be few counties in England where property in land was divided

into such small parcels, and where those small properties were so universally occupied by their owners as in Cumberland. The annual value of these small estates varied from five to fifty pounds; but the value of most of them ranged from fifteen to thirty pounds a year.⁴⁹ By far the greater part of the county was held under lords of manors, "by that species of vassallage, called *customary tenure*; subject to the payment of fines and heriots, on alienation, death of the lord, or death of the tenant, and to the payment of certain annual rents, and performance of various services, called *Boon-days*, such as getting the lord's peats, ploughing and harrowing his land, reaping his corn, haymaking, carrying letters, etc., etc., whenever summoned by the lord. We cannot pretend to be accurate, but believe, that two thirds of the county are held by this . . . tenure, principally in those small tenements mentioned above. The remaining part is mostly freehold, which has increased with the inclosure of commons, and sometimes whole parishes, or manors, have been enfranchised on these occasions."⁵⁰ These small proprietors, locally called *statesmen*, were not looked upon as likely to adopt the new agriculture very readily. They "seem to inherit with the estates of their ancestors, their notions of cultivating them, and are almost as much attached to the one as the other. They are rarely aspiring, and seem content with their situation; nor is luxury in any shape an object of their desires. Their little estates, which they cultivate with their own hands, produce almost every necessary article of food; and clothing they in part manufacture for themselves. They have a high character for sincerity and honesty, and probably few people enjoy more ease and humble happiness."⁵¹

As has been stated a large proportion of the county of Westmoreland was possessed by landowning farmers. These yeomen were said to be gentle and obliging when treated with kindness and respect, but the consciousness of their independence is said to have made them impatient of oppression or insult. They lived poorly and worked hard. Some of them in the vicinity of Kendal, did weaving for the manufacturers of that town during the intervals when they had little agricultural work on hand. But the evidences of their decline were already present.

⁴⁹ Bailey & Culley: *Agriculture of Cumberland*, Chap. II., Sec. I.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Chap. IV., Sec. I. Above Chap. III., Sec. I.

In the northern part of Lancashire the change from yeomen to gentlemen farmers, characteristic of the southern part of that county, was not in evidence. In the northern part of the county "a great portion" of the land was still owned and occupied by yeomen.⁵²

In Northumberland, small estates were found in the southern and middle parts of the county, but very rarely in the northern part. Estates varied in their annual value from twenty to upwards of twenty thousand pounds. There were two or three manors of customary tenants "toward the head of the South Tyne," and there were some life-leaseholds, but most of the landed property was freehold.⁵³

We know little of this class of men in Durham. It is clear that on the lands under the control of the Bishop of Durham, there were copyholders who held their lands "by copy of court roll, kept and recorded at Durham, in the Halmot Court of the Bishop, as lord of the several manors wherein such estates were held."⁵⁴ There were some life leaseholders, and most probably some freeholders in the southern part of the county, who occupied their own lands, but farther than this we find no direct evidence. However the Report on Durham was written by one of the men who reported on Northumberland and Cumberland, and while much attention was given to those who cultivate their own lands in those two counties, this class is not directly mentioned in Durham. On the other hand there is more mention of farmers and their holdings; and Pringle, writing at the same time, of Westmoreland, and speaking of those who occupy their own lands, said: "These men, in contradistinction to farmers, or those who hire the land they occupy, are usually denominated statesmen." Hence our general impression is that there were few Yeomen in Durham at the close of the eighteenth century. A study of the election returns for 1832 seems to verify this conclusion.

In the election records of that year are given the number and qualifications of the voters for the Northern Division of the county of Durham. In the Durham District there were 795 votes cast. And the list of qualifications shows 48 freeholders of land

⁵² Bailey & Culley: *Agriculture of Northumberland*, p. 24.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵⁴ J. Bailey: *Agriculture of Durham*, Chap. II., Sec. II.

or estates, 197 occupiers of land and a scattering few leaseholders and copyholders. In the Chester-le-Street District, there were 635 votes cast, and their qualifications show 6 freeholders of land, 14 copyholders and 100 occupiers of land.

While the yeomanry were practically extinct in the East Riding of Yorkshire, a very different state of affairs existed in the other divisions of that county. About one-third of the North Riding was owned by Yeomen. "Much the largest proportion" of the dales of the moorlands of this Riding was in the possession of this class of men. The annual value of their estates rarely amounted to one hundred and fifty pounds. The tenure was mostly freehold, though mention is made of "some few" copyholders. It was thought that the yeomanry were on the increase rather than on the decline. Some large properties had recently been sold in parcels without an equal tendency on the part of large proprietors to increase the size of their estates.⁵⁵ Marshall gives a more detailed view of that part of the North Riding known as the Vale of Pickering, which contains about two hundred thousand acres. The land of the Vale was largely in the hands of small owners. There was only one large estate in the district. In speaking of the township of Pickering, Marshall says, "It contains about three hundred freeholders, principally occupying their own small estates; many of which have fallen down, by lineal descent, from the original purchasers. No great man, nor scarcely an esquire, has yet been able to get a footing in the parish; or if any one has, the custom of portioning younger sons and daughters by a division of lands, has reduced to its original atoms the estate which may have been accumulated. At present no man is owner of three hundred pounds a year landed estate lying within the township."⁵⁶ Most of the Vale of Pickering had been enclosed, before 1788, without reducing the number of small proprietors. "During the century," says Marshall in speaking of the township of Pickering, "the common fields and common meadows have been gradually contracting by amicable exchanges and transfers and are now in a manner wholly inclosed."⁵⁷

"A considerable part" of the West Riding of Yorkshire was possessed by small proprietors who were very commonly free-

⁵⁵ J. Tuke: *Agriculture of the N. Riding of Yorkshire*, Chap. II., Sec. I.

⁵⁶ Marshall: *Rural Economy of Yorkshire*, Vol. I., pp. 19, 20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

holders, yet the number of copyholders was also "considerable." These small proprietors generally occupied their own lands and were said to manage and cultivate their farms in an attractive manner.⁵⁸ Contrary to what might be expected from what has been said of the districts about Manchester, it was thought that the presence of manufactures in the West Riding of Yorkshire had drawn capital away from agriculture which might otherwise have been invested in estates, and this, it was thought, accounted for the large number of small proprietors.⁵⁹

Lincolnshire showed both extremes in the size of estates. The whole of the northwestern portion of the county was owned by half a dozen persons. Nearly all the land along the Humber and the Trent, from Ferriby Sluice to Gunhouse, inclusive, a distance of nearly twenty miles, belonged to three persons. But, in the southern part of the county small proprietors were very numerous. The parish of Kinton, with an area of five thousand acres, contained one hundred and forty-six proprietors. One hundred and eighteen proprietors owned two-thirds of the parish of Barton. In the southeastern corner of Lincolnshire, in what was called South Holland, small proprietors had been increasing in numbers; a fifth part of the district was occupied by small freeholders.⁶⁰ Half of the occupiers in the "Fen parishes" were freeholders. Freeholds were numerous in the hundred of Shirbeck. In the parish of Frieston, containing above three thousand acres, there was not one plot of more than sixty acres. The Isle of Axholm was at that time, as more recently, noted for its small proprietors. Most of the district was said to resemble some rich parts of France and Flanders. The inhabitants were collected together in villages or hamlets. Almost every house was inhabited by a farmer who owned a small farm. The farms varied in size from five to forty acres. The land was uncommonly fertile, and these small proprietors cultivated it with the greatest care; so that a farm of twenty acres could be said to "support a family

⁵⁸R. Brown: *Agriculture of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, Chap. II., Secs. I., II.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, Chap. IV., Sec. I.

⁶⁰While the word freehold is often used in the discussions concerning these districts, Young states in another connection that there was "much copyhold" in the low country. The writer has taken care to use freehold where the reports contain the word, and in all other cases to express the idea of ownership, which includes copyhold, in some other way.

very well." These families were "very poor respecting money," says Young, but they were "very happy respecting their mode of existence." To quote Young further regarding these small proprietors, "They are passionately fond of buying a bit of land. Though I have said they are happy, yet I should note that it was remarked to me, that the little proprietors work like Negroes, and do not live so well as the inhabitants of the poorhouse; but all is made amends for by possessing land." While these very small proprietors were so prevalent in the Isle of Axholm, the district about Louth afforded landowning farmers of a very different type. Men who owned estates which would rent for seven hundred pounds a year, remained farmers and kept entirely to the manners and appearances of the other farmers. These large yeomen farmers were "Thriving, independent, and wealthy," says Young, "and in consequence of all, as happy as their personal merit, their moral virtue, and dependence on, and attention to their religious duties permit them to be."⁶¹

In Nottingham there were "Some considerable, as well as inferior yeomen, occupying their own lands." Their tenures were "freehold, copyhold and leasehold." There were "many leaseholds for three lives absolute (or freehold leases) holden under the archbishop of York, or the Church of Southwell."⁶²

The whole midland district, including the counties of Leicester, Rutland, and Warwick, with the northern margin of Northamptonshire, the eastern portion of Staffordshire, and the southern extremities of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, is described by Marshall as abounding in yeomen of the highest class. Men cultivating their own estates, worth from two to five hundred pounds a year, were thickly scattered over almost every part of the district. One instance is given of a man whose estate was worth two thousand pounds a year, who cultivated his own land and lived as a yeoman.⁶³ While the County of Northampton contained a considerable number of yeomen occupying their own estates,⁶⁴ it was also "remarkably full" of large proprietors.⁶⁵ In Staffordshire there were gentlemen of large and of small fortunes

⁶¹ Young: *Agriculture of Lincoln*, Chapter II.

⁶² R. Lowe: *Agriculture of Nottingham*, Chapter II: Sections I and II.

⁶³ Marshall: *Rural Economy of the Midland Counties*, p. 13.

⁶⁴ W. Pitt: *Agriculture of Northampton*, Chap. II., Sec. I.

⁶⁵ Young: *Annals*, Vol. VI., p. 465.

occupying their own estates.⁶⁶ The land throughout the midland counties was generally held in fee, but occasional instances of copyholds and leaseholds are given.

There was "an infinite number" of freeholders and copyholders in Shropshire who occupied their own estates "of all inferior sizes." Men who had become wealthy in manufactures or commerce were forming large estates by concentrating the estates of others. But on the other hand men of hereditary fortune were being forced to alienate their domains which were often divided and sold to thrifty farmers.⁶⁷

Herefordshire afforded a few estates varying from four hundred to one thousand pounds a year, which were occupied by their owners, who cultivated and managed their estates in the best style and who were introducing the new agriculture. But there were "a few only" of this class at the close of the eighteenth century. Formerly they were "much more numerous."⁶⁸

A large portion" of Monmouthshire was owned by two great proprietors. Besides these were proprietors with incomes from one to three thousand pounds, and a third class with incomes from three hundred to one thousand pounds a year. These proprietors generally occupied considerable tracts of land, and many of them were at great expense in improving their soil. There were a few smaller landowners to be found in some parts of the county, some of whom were better and some worse than "the general mass of [tenant] farmers."

The landed property of Worcestershire was diffused into the hands of the various classes. Land was often upon sale and became the property of those who had acquired the money with which to purchase it, either by inheritance, by trade, or by agriculture. The number of "gentlemen" occupying land was on the increase, and perhaps Worcestershire should be counted with those parts of the country where the yeomanry were being replaced by gentlemen farmers.⁶⁹ The small farmers were suffering from lack of capital. The large and opulent farmers were introducing new methods in agriculture. They were learning

⁶⁶W. Pitt: Agriculture of Staffordshire, Chap. II., Sec. II.

⁶⁷J. Plymley: Agriculture of Shropshire, Chap. II., Secs. I and II., and Chap. IV., Sec. I.

⁶⁸J. Duncumb: Agriculture of Hereford, Chap. II., Secs. I and II.

⁶⁹W. Pitt: Agriculture of Worcestershire, Chap. II., Secs. I. and II.

also to profit by the great fluctuations in prices, peculiarly characteristic of the war period, by holding their produce for the very highest prices.⁷⁰

Yeomen were numerous in Gloucestershire. Marshall tells us that the Vale of Gloucester contained no large estates. Several noblemen had "off estates" there, but none of them were extensive. The remainder of the vale belonged principally to resident gentlemen, and to "a pretty numerous yeomanry."⁷¹ Landed property was in a few hands in the Cotswold Hills, and the number of yeomen was inconsiderable.⁷² There was a "considerable yeomanry" in the Vale of Berkeley, but most of the Vale was owned by great landlords.⁷³ A contested election in 1776 gives evidence of 5,790 freeholders in Gloucestershire, and it was thought that the number had increased by the end of the century. But the election records for 1811 give only 5,757 freeholders, which shows a decline rather than an increase in this class.⁷⁴ Mr. Rudge interprets the presence of so many freeholders to mean that the number of yeomen who possessed freeholds of various values, was great.⁷⁵ While this conclusion is doubtless correct, a glance at the pages of these reports shows that by no means all of the "freeholders" were owners of farm land, and not all of the owners of farmland resided upon their land, and not all who resided upon their land were yeomen. In order to ascertain the significance of these figures the writer worked out the following result from the first fourteen pages of the poll report of 1811 which covers 98 pages in all. On these fourteen pages 870 freeholders are recorded, of whom 388 are "landowners," that is, they were owners of more than a house and garden. Of these 388 owners of farm land, 252 occupied land, and of those who owned and occupied land, 209 occupied all the land which they owned, and may be classed as yeomen; while the others occupied only a part of their estates and were, evidently, gentlemen, esquires, or greater landlords who resided in the county. Thus it

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Chap. IV., Sec. I.

⁷¹ W. Marshall: *Rural Economy of Gloucestershire*, Vol. O., p. 19.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 12.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 89.

⁷⁴ *The Poll at the Election of a Knight of the Shire for the County of Gloucester.*

⁷⁵ *Agriculture of Gloucestershire*, Chap. II., Sec. I.

seems that only about one-fourth of the "freeholders" mentioned in the election records were yeomen farmers.

There were a few noblemen and gentlemen in Oxfordshire, who owned large estates. These estates and the land owned by the Church and the University, formed "a considerable portion" of the county. There were also many medium-sized estates, and many small proprietors, particularly in the open fields. The northern part of the county afforded many well-to-do farmers who owned their farms.⁷⁶ Freehold and copyhold leases for lives were still in use. Church and college leases, both for lives and for years, abounded generally.

In Berkshire great landlords were rare. The yeomen are said to have been the "distinguishing character of the county." These yeomen are described by W. Mavor as "A high spirited and independent" class, "actively engaged in agricultural pursuits." In the parish of Wickfield, consisting of nearly ten thousand acres, the largest estate was less than four hundred acres in extent. The manor of Hungerford belonged to the inhabitants, who annually chose a constable, who acted as lord of the manor. These independent yeomen were thought to be increasing in numbers.⁷⁷

Cambridgeshire contained many large estates, and much college land; but "perhaps the greater part" of the county was in estates, with an annual value ranging from two hundred to a thousand pounds. There were also many estates worth from twenty to fifty pounds per annum, which were occupied by owners.⁷⁸

After speaking of the estates in Suffolk which were worth from three to eight thousand pounds a year, Young says, "Under this there are numbers of all sizes; but the most interesting circumstance is of a different complexion—I mean the rich yeomanry, as they are called, farmers occupying their own lands, of a value rising from one to four hundred pounds a year. A most valuable set of men, who, having the means and the most powerful inducements to good husbandry, carry agriculture to a high degree of perfection." The most of the county was freehold, but copyholds were numerous.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Young: *Agriculture of Oxfordshire*, Chap. II., Sec. I.

⁷⁷ W. Mavor: *Agriculture of Berkshire*, Chap. II., Secs. I. and II.

⁷⁸ W. Gooch: *Agriculture of Cambridgeshire*, Chap. II.

⁷⁹ *Agriculture of Suffolk*, Chap. II., Secs. I and II.

In the report upon Essex,⁸⁰ Howett is quoted as saying, "Perhaps there never was a greater proportion of small and moderate sized farms, the property of mere farmers, than at present. Such has been the flourishing state of agriculture for twenty or thirty years past, that scarcely an estate is sold, if divided into lots of forty or fifty to two or three hundred a year, but is purchased by farmers, who can certainly afford to give for them more than almost any other persons, as they turn them to the highest advantage by their own cultivation; and hence arises a fair prospect of landed property gradually returning to a situation of similar possession to what it was a hundred, or a hundred and fifty years ago, when our inferior gentry resided upon their estates in the country, and, by their generous hospitality, diffused comfort and cheerfulness around them. Nor let us envy or grudge the farmers this prosperity; by their laborious and spirited exertion, they highly deserve it."

The landed property of Kent was very much divided, there being few extensive possessions which were not intersected by other persons' property. "This distribution of freeholds," says Hasted,⁸¹ "cements a good understanding between the gentry and yeomanry. Their lands being everywhere so much intermixed one with another, obliges them to a mutual civility for their own interest and convenience; nor are the latter so much dependent on the gentry as the inhabitants of most other countries, by copyhold or customary tenures of which there are very few in Kent." It was thought that the number of yeoman were on the increase as estates were frequently divided and sold to occupiers.⁸² In the district of Maidstone there were occupiers of land of every order—"men of fortune, yeomen, husbandmen, and tradesmen." The yeomenry of Kent had long been proverbial for their wealth and prosperity.⁸³

All blessed with health, and as for wealth,
By fortune's kind embraces,
A yeoman grey shall oft outweigh
A knight in other places.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Young, A.: *Agriculture of Essex*, Vol. I., Chap. II., Sec. I.

⁸¹ J. Boys: *Agriculture of Kent*, Chap. II., Sec. I.

⁸² Boys, *Ibid.*

⁸³ Marshall: *Southern Counties*, Vol. I., p. 53.

⁸⁴ Quoted in C. Whitehead, in *Agriculture of Kent* in J. R. A. S. E., Series III.; Vol. X., part III., 1889, from *A Collection of Proverbs and Old Sayings which are either used in or relate to Kent*, by S. Pegge.

"Out of the law of Gavelkind," says Marshall, "this valuable order of men have principally risen. And seeing the present flourishing state of their country after seven hundred years of experience, the wisdom of that law appears in a strong light."⁸⁵ A contested election in 1790 registered 6,543 freeholders living within Kent and 436 living outside of the county. The vast majority, perhaps 80 or 90 per cent., of the freeholders were owners of agricultural land. And a glance at the columns shows a very large percentage, perhaps one-half, of these owners of land to be the sole occupiers of their estates.⁸⁶

Sussex was cultivated principally by tenant farmers. There were, however, a scattering few yeomen in the "Weald" and along the sea coast.⁸⁷

In Hampshire "the great bulk" of the land was "held and cultivated . . . by yeomanry, occupying their freehold, copyhold, or leasehold possessions." Some of these farms were supposed to have formerly composed a part of the demesne lands of the see of Winchester, but at that time they were granted by the Bishop as freeholds for three lives. They were generally renewed to the families in possession for many successive generations. The fine on renewal varied, from one and a half to two years' improved rent, valued by competent persons in the vicinity.⁸⁸

In speaking of Wiltshire at this time,⁸⁹ Davis says, "The greater part of this county was formerly, and at no very remote period, possessed by large proprietors. Almost every manor had its resident lord, who held part of the lands in demesne, and granted out the rest by copy or lease to under-tenants, usually for the term of three lives renewable. A state of commonage, and particularly of open common field, was peculiarly favorable to this tenure. Enclosures naturally tend to its extinction. The northwest part of Wiltshire, being much better adapted to enclosures and to sub-divisions of property than the South, was first enclosed; the southeast, or down districts, . . . has undergone few enclosures, and fewer sub-divisions; and whilst a great

⁸⁵Southern Counties, Vol. I., p. 53.

⁸⁶Kent: Poll for Knights of the Shire.

⁸⁷Marshall: Southern Cos., Vol. II., pp. 104, 171, 233.

⁸⁸C. Vancouver: Agriculture of Hampshire, Chap. II., Sec. I.

⁸⁹Agriculture of Wiltshire, P. XIII.

deal of the property of the former district has been divided and sub-divided, and gone into the hands of the many, the property in the latter district has been bought up by the great landholders, and is now in fewer hands than it was in the seventeenth century. . . . Generally speaking, it may be said that a considerable [proportion] of the North-west District is possessed by small proprietors, and that by far the greater part of the South-east District is the property of wealthy landholders."

Somersetshire contained many estates which were worth from two to six thousand pounds per annum, but the "greater part of the county" was owned by the middle class, holding lands worth from fifty to five hundred pounds a year. A part of the land was leased out on lives, a part was let out for short terms, and no small quantity was the fee of the occupiers, who constituted "a most respectable yeomanry."⁹⁰

Estates in Dorsetshire were generally large in comparison with those of most other counties.⁹¹ The western part of the county contained most of the yeomanry. The inhabitants of Portland were almost all freeholders.⁹²

Life leaseholds were common in Dorsetshire. Stevenson records the conditions of an expired lease in which the term was dependent upon the lives of the farmer and his two sons; but was to terminate in ninety-nine years, even if all three had not yet died. The various payments to which the tenant was subject were as follows: Heriot, five pounds; fine, two hundred and eighty pounds; yearly rent, two pounds four shillings and four pence; a capon or one shilling; a harvest journey or six pence; a plow journey or two shillings and six pence.⁹³

In Devonshire there were a few large estates. "No inconsiderable part of the whole county" belonged to the sees of Exeter, York, and Salisbury, the Dean and Chapter of Windsor, the Universities, and the Duchy of Cornwall. Yet a "large proportion" of the county was owned and occupied by small proprietors.⁹⁴ However, these small proprietors did not as a rule hold their land

⁹⁰J. Billingsley: *Agriculture of Somersetshire*, Chap. II.

⁹¹Stevenson: *Agriculture of Dorsetshire*, Chap. II., Sec. I.

⁹²The lands here were equally divided among all the sons upon the death of the father, according to the custom of *Gavelkind*. See Stevenson, J. B., Chap. II., Sec. I.

⁹³*Agriculture of Dorsetshire*, Chap. II., Sec. II.

⁹⁴Vancouver: *Agriculture of Devonshire*, Chap. II., Sec. I.

in fee; life leaseholds were more common with this class of farmers. In speaking of the western part of Devonshire, Marshall said, "Landed property puts on an appearance, here, very different from that which it wears in other parts of the kingdom. The fee-simple is principally in the possession of men of large property. But instead of *letting* out their lands to tenants, at an annual rent equivalent to their value, they are *sold* in small parcels or farms, generally for *three lives* named by the purchaser, or ninety-nine years, provided any one of the parties, named, survives that period; reserving, however, a small annual rent, together with heriot or other forfeiture, on the death of each nominee, similar to those attached to copyhold tenure which this species of tenancy, *or* tenure, very much resembles; it being usual to put in fresh lives as the preceding ones drop off, receiving a fine or adequate purchase for the addition of a fresh life, or lives. This state of landed property which is common in the west of England forms one of the many striking features, which Rural Economy at present exhibits in this part of the Island."⁹⁵

Vancouver did not favor this form of land tenure. "Lifehold tenures," said he, "are more injurious and extensive than is generally apprehended. The same capital employed in the purchase of a lease for ninety-nine years, determinable on three lives, applied to the stocking, cultivating, and improving a more extensive occupation held at a fair annual rent, and under an encouraging term of years, must produce, in the contemplation of such property, very different emotions in the mind of the owner; to the occupier results are infinitely more advantageous; and to the public at large a more abundant supply is produced than can possibly be derived from a capital employed in the purchase of a more narrowed occupation on an eventually undisturbed possession of 99 years. . . . Fortunately for the future improvement and prosperity of the country, this species of tenure is becoming much lessened within the last twenty years."⁹⁶

Mr. G. B. Morgan speaks of "The practical respectable yeomanry" in Cornwall and does not indicate how numerous they were. But says "Property is very much divided. . . . The size of estates varies greatly, perhaps from twenty to five hundred

⁹⁵Marshall: Rural Economy of the West of England, Vol. I., p. 43.

⁹⁶Ibid., Chap. II., Sec. II.

acres, very few exceeding four hundred pounds per annum. Many gentlemen and clergymen in this county occupy their own estates, and glebes; and keep their grounds in a very superior state of cultivation. . . . As to the tenure of lands it has been much the custom of the country to grant leases for lives to the tenants, for a term of ninety-nine years, determinable on the death of the longest liver of three lives, to be named by the taker. Upon the death of one of the lives named in the lease, it was usual for the landlord to consent to the adding a new life to the two remaining. The consideration in the original grant was uniformly a fine paid in hand of from fourteen to eighteen years rent of the estates, with a small reserved, or conventional rent, and suit and services in the manor court; the renewal generally a fine only of three years rent, for one life, or seven for two lives. . . . There is a very considerable proportion of the lands of Cornwall now held by the tenantry under these leases; but it is certain, that the number of new grants, or renewal of old ones, is on the decrease; and seldom take place, except under some peculiar circumstances affecting the particular estate, or from some particular motive, arising from the situation of the proprietor. The tenants under these leases (called leasehold, or fine leases) are always subject to the taxes, and repairs of every description . . . Under the property tax they are rated both as proprietor and occupier."⁹⁷

In speaking of the advantages and disadvantages of the life leases of the west of England Marshall said, "Unfortunately for the purchaser and his family, as well as for the community, he has laid out his whole on the purchase, and has not a shilling left for improvements; nay, has perhaps borrowed part of the purchase money; and has thus entailed on himself and his family lives of poverty and hard labor. Whereas, had he expended the same money in stocking and improving a rented farm, he might have enriched his family, and have thrown into the markets a much greater proportionate quantity of produce." After naming many other disadvantages of leases on lives and condemning especially the speculations which they involved, Marshall continues, "These disagreeable circumstances have induced several men

⁹⁷ Agriculture of Cornwall, Chap. II., Sec. I.

of property to suffer the life leases of their estates to drop in; and, afterwards, to let their lands for an annual rent."⁹⁸

With all the objections to life leaseholds, Billingsly considered them much better investments than freeholds,⁹⁹ and Anderson was at the same time discoursing upon the bad consequences of a farmer's lessening his capital by the purchase of land.¹⁰⁰

Thus, when the evidence is brought together for the various parts of England it is found that enclosures, and the desire to be farmers on a large scale had led to a decline in landownership on the part of farmers in some places; and that in others the high prices due to the presence of the many purchasers who had made fortunes in manufactures or commerce had wrought the same result; but, that taking England as a whole, there still remained a large class of landowning farmers which was often and in many places increased by new purchases of land. Yet one form of freehold, life leasehold, was on the decline and this was doubtless the most prevalent form of landownership on the part of farmers in the Southwest. If the question were asked, "Were there as many landowning farmers in England in 1800 as in 1688?" it would be impossible to answer the question; but it can be said that while here and there counties showed a marked change, taking England as a whole, the decline had doubtless been relatively small.

⁹⁸ West of England, Vol. I., p. 45.

⁹⁹ Hunter's Georgical Essays, Vol. VI., Essay V.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Vol. VI., Essay XII., Sec. 45. See note.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION FROM 1820 TO 1836, AND ITS
INFLUENCE UPON LANDOWNERSHIP.

The first twelve years of the nineteenth century were extremely prosperous times for English agriculture, and until 1820 prices had not been reduced very materially;¹ but from 1820 to 1836

¹Tooke, *History of Prices*, Vol. I., p. 5. Also, *The Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture*, for the year 1833, p. xii, from which the following table is taken :

The price of wheat, per quarter, from 1797 to 1833.

ANNUAL AVERAGE OF THE KINGDOM.		5 YEAR AVERAGES	HIGHEST AND LOWEST PRICES IN THE 5 YEARS.	
Years	Average S. d.	S. d.	Date of highest price.	Date of lowest price.
1797.....	52—2	79—1	21, March, 1801. 154 S. 1 d.	25, March, 1797. 47 S. 11 d.
1798.....	50—4			
1799.....	66—11			
1800.....	110—5			
1801.....	115—11	69—9	17, August, 1805. 97 S. 8 d.	3, March, 1804. 49 S.
1802.....	67—9			
1803.....	57—1			
1804.....	60—5			
1805.....	87—1	83—5	9, June, 1810. 114 S. 10 d.	14, November, 1807. 65 S. 7 d.
1806.....	76—9			
1807.....	73—1			
1808.....	78—11			
1809.....	94—5	83—2	8, August, 1812. 130 S. 3 d.	13, January, 1816. 53 S. 1 d.
1810.....	103—3			
1811.....	92—5			
1812.....	122—8			
1813.....	106—6	74—	23, June, 1817. 112 S. 7 d.	29, December, 1821. 46 S. 2 d.
1814.....	72—1			
1815.....	63—8			
1816.....	76—2			
1817.....	94—	56—1	25, June, 1825. 69 S. 5 d.	26, October, 1822. 33 S. 1 d.
1818.....	33—8			
1819.....	72—3			
1820.....	65—10			
1821.....	54—5	61—8	14, November, 1823. 76 S. 7 d.	19, October, 1832. 51 S. 3 d.
1822.....	43—3			
1823.....	51—9			
1824.....	62—			
1825.....	66—6	56—9		
1826.....	56—11			
1827.....	56—9			
1828.....	60—5			
1829.....	66—3	64—3		
1830.....	64—3			
1831.....	66—4			
1832.....	53—8			
1833.....	53—1			

prices were comparatively low. This era of low prices, following the great prosperity of war times, wrought disaster among all classes in England who were dependent upon agriculture for an income. Tooke attributes the high prices of the one period and the low prices of the other to the war, the currency, and the variations of the seasons, along with a rapidly growing population engaged in manufactures and commerce. The war made the importation of food dangerous and expensive and a somewhat debased currency, and bad seasons at the close of the century, with an increasing demand for food resulted in enormously high prices. On the other hand, peace, a restored currency and a series of excellent crops after 1819 resulted in a great reduction in prices.

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the influence of this agricultural depression upon the landowning farmers of England.

We are fortunate in having the minutes of the evidence given before the Select Committee on Agriculture, during this period, which evidence gives a clear account of the effect of the depression in this respect.

There still existed large numbers of landowning farmers in the various parts of England in 1833.² Many of these men held estates which had been handed down from father to son for many generations,³ while large numbers had purchased the land they occupied.⁴ But these yeomen farmers were hard pressed and many had sold their land before 1833. When we go carefully through the minutes of evidence given before the committee we are especially impressed with the rapid decrease in the number of landowning farmers, which had taken place after the war, and before 1833. In Cumberland and Westmoreland the number had "considerably diminished."⁵ Up to the war properties had continued long in the same families,⁶ but in 1833, Mr. Blamire said he believed that since 1815 a greater change had taken place in the

²Parliamentary Papers, 1833, Vol. V., questions 6695, 2346, 5819, 5820, 412, 413, 414, 415, 8474, 1691, 2413, 2196, 2202, 7375, 6405, 9486, 8823, 1262, *9196.

³Parliamentary Papers, 1833, Vol. V., questions 1702, 6061, 416, 1696, 2420, 9930.

⁴Ibid., questions 3105, 3106, 12, 216, 7002, 5820, 416, 532, 2197, 9928, 4862-4866; Parl. Papers, 1836, Vol. VIII., questions 1192, 1268-9.

⁵Parl. Papers, 1833, Vol. V., question 6697.

⁶Ibid., question 6958.

proprietorship of the small farms than in any antecedent period of much longer duration.⁷ In 1837, Blamire was again before the Committee, and says: "The condition [of the landowning farmers in Cumberland] is generally speaking most pitiable. At the present moment they are as a body, in fact, ceasing to exist at all."⁸ Mr. Merry, the owner and occupier of a three-hundred acre farm in the North Riding of Yorkshire stated that in the different dales in the district where he lived the farmers had nearly all been "Ancient freeholders;" but the number of such farmers had been "regularly lessening for ten years," during which time they had been reduced about a seventh.⁹ From Mr. W. Simpson we learn that the landowning farmers were "nearly all gone" near Doncaster, Yorkshire.¹⁰ In Nottinghamshire there were "comparatively very few remaining."¹¹ In Leicestershire, Northumberland, and the Midland Counties, generally, small proprietors farming their own land were numerous but "a great many of them" had been ruined.¹² In Shropshire and in Cheshire the number of "small landed proprietors" had "greatly diminished, . . . since the year 1800."¹³ In Herefordshire there were still a great many yeomen but fewer than twenty years earlier.¹⁴ In Worcestershire a good many freeholders, who farmed their own lands, had sold out.¹⁵ In Kent, near Rochester, no great number had gone to the wall, but they were poor, many of them living little better than workingmen.¹⁶ Such farmers were yet numerous in Hampshire and West Sussex but many had been compelled to sell their estates¹⁷ and those who remained were "much reduced in point of circumstances." In Wiltshire the number of landowning farmers had diminished "most materially" within the last fifteen years.¹⁸ In Somersetshire land

⁷Ibid., question 6701.

⁸Parliamentary Papers, 1837, Vol. V., question 5107.

⁹Parliamentary Papers, 1833, Vol. V., questions 2439, 2533.

¹⁰Ibid., question 3105.

¹¹Ibid., S. Wooley, questions 12, 216.

¹²Ibid., Buckley, questions 8574, 8579, 8581, 8587.

¹³Ibid., Lee, questions 5825, 6158.

¹⁴Ibid., question 8475.

¹⁵Ibid., question 1697.

¹⁶Ibid., questions 6405-6413.

¹⁷Ibid., questions 9923-9924, and 9926.

¹⁸Ibid., question 1262.

had been changing hands a great deal since the war, and the number of farmers who bought land was not so great as the number of those who had sold.¹⁹ It was the custom there for the landlords to "run out" the life leases and not make any new ones.²⁰ Thus all the evidence points to the conclusion that an unusually rapid decline of the yeomanry had taken place during the period of the agricultural depression which followed the close of the Napoleonic wars. We shall now investigate somewhat in detail the causes of this unusually rapid decline.

Extravagance, living beyond one's income, often leads to bankruptcy in all lines of business, and it would be strange, indeed, if this were not, occasionally, the cause which compels farmers to sell their estates. From Norden we learn that in 1607 this was sometimes the cause of failure on the part of landowning farmers in England.²¹ In 1833, a great many of the yeomen of Cheshire were living beyond their means. During the period of high prices they had accustomed themselves to a standard of living which they were unable to maintain after prices had fallen, without gradually consuming their estates. Lee says of this class "Their property is nearly gone."²² There is a suggestion that a change of this kind in the habits of the yeomen farmers may have been the occasion of forced sales of land in Worcestershire²³ and in Somersetshire.²⁴

But while extravagance may at times have been the cause of failure, the yeomen as a class were industrious and frugal.²⁵ Speaking of the yeomanry of Cumberland, Blamire says, they "are quite as frugal as the tenantry and often more so, and their situation is often worse. . . . They equally lodge their labourers in their own houses, and dine at the same table with them."²⁶ Having to give up their estates was "by no means the effect of improvidence on their part."²⁷ Mr. W. Thurnall said

¹⁹Ibid., questions 9208-9209.

²⁰Ibid., questions 4970-4974.

²¹Surveyors' Dialogue, Edition of 1618, p. 81 *et seq.*

²²Parliamentary Papers, 1833, Vol. V., questions 5816-5817.

²³Ibid., question 1700.

²⁴Ibid., question 9206.

²⁵Ibid., question 1704, question 8585.

²⁶Ibid., questions 6705-6706.

²⁷Parliamentary Papers, 1837, Vol. V., question 5111.

that in Cambridgeshire the yeomen were very economical and always hard-working men.²⁸ "There is not a more industrious man in the three counties," says J. B. Turner, "than a man in Herefordshire whose estate has been sold under bankruptcy."²⁹

It was not, as a rule, lack of frugality and industry which ruined so many of the yeomanry during this period of depression; it was primarily the fall in prices at a time when indebtedness was very prevalent with this class.³⁰ This indebtedness was sometimes incurred for the purpose of purchasing land, sometimes for improvements, often to provide for the younger members of the family, and, occasionally, to cover general living expenses.

Mr. W. Simpson told the Committee of 1833 that the yeomanry near Doncaster were "many of them bankrupts." "Farmers who, having four or five thousand pounds, bought farms twenty-five or thirty years ago, borrowing part of the purchase money, have been obliged to sell, and they have nothing left."³¹ In Nottinghamshire "a great number bought land at high prices, and having mortgaged their farms for more than their value at the reduced prices, they have been almost universally ruined."³² This class of farmers met with the same misfortune in Lincolnshire.³³ In Cheshire, "A great many farmers got a considerable sum of money, and were mad to lay it out in land. They purchased land at forty years' purchase, in some instances, and borrowed probably half the money," and soon after, the produce sold for so much less than formerly that they could not pay the interest on the money they had borrowed and were "obliged to sell their properties for what they could get."³⁴ In Shropshire, again, farmers paid high prices for land and "borrowed money, as much as they could sell the property for afterwards."³⁵ These same

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1836, Vol. VIII., question 2423.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1833, Vol. V., question 8477.

³⁰ *Parliamentary Papers*, 1833, Vol. V., questions 6707, *et seq.* 2346, 6063, 532, 598, 1701, 4401, 4402, 9935, 9206, also Vol. VIII., for 1836, questions 11310; Vol. V., for 1837, question 5108.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1833, Vol. V., question 3102-8.

³² *Ibid.*, question 12216, question 12219.

³³ *Ibid.*, question 7903.

³⁴ *Parliamentary Papers*, 1833, Vol. V., question 5820.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, question 532.

stories are repeated for Norfolk,³⁶ Hampshire,³⁷ Somersetshire,³⁸ Berkshire and Buckinghamshire.³⁹

Improvements do not appear to have been very generally the occasion of indebtedness, but in some instances the witnesses before the Select Committee gave this as an important cause.⁴⁰

The provision for younger children, or the paying off of the other heirs when one member of the family took the estate, was often the occasion of heavy indebtedness. In Cumberland, the "Statesmen" had large families and "from a miscalculation of their real situation" they left their children "larger fortunes than they ought to have done, and saddled the oldest son with the payment of a sum of money which it was impossible for him to pay."⁴¹ ⁴² This is given as an important cause of indebtedness in Nottinghamshire,⁴³ Somersetshire,⁴⁴ Berkshire and Buckinghamshire.⁴⁵

Thus it would seem that in 1833 these small estates were very generally incumbered. The indebtedness had been incurred during the period of high prices; and when prices fell the debt was often equal to, if not greater than, the value of the land. The whole net product would not, in many cases, pay the interest. Where this did not force the yeomen to give up their estates at once, the land usually came into the market at the death of the

³⁶ Ibid., question 2197.

³⁷ Ibid., question 9928.

³⁸ Ibid., questions 4862-4866.

³⁹ Parliamentary Papers for 1836, Vol. VIII., question 1192, question 1268.

⁴⁰ Parliamentary Papers, 1833, Vol. V. Commencing with 5816, Lee, Cheshire, the minutes read: "If a yeoman, tempted by high prices of the war, had borrowed money to improve his little property, what would be the condition of that man with the prices falling, the debt remaining and his own habits remaining the same?" The witness replies, "Entire ruin." Again, with Buckley from the Midland Counties as witness, the minutes, 8582 *et seq.*, read as follows: "From your own knowledge, were not many of these small proprietors tempted during the war to borrow money to improve their lands? No doubt about that . . . Those parties, without any fault of their own, have been by this debt, contracted for the improvement of their estates, worked out of their estates? Completely so, without the least fault of their own . . . I know many who have been . . . ruined" in this way.

⁴¹ This system seems comparable to *Anerbrecht* in Germany.

⁴² Parliamentary Papers, 1833, Vol. V., question 1704; 1837, Vol. V., question 5107.

⁴³ Ibid., 1833, Vol. V., question 12216 to question 12219.

⁴⁴ Ibid., question 9198.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1836, Vol. VIII., question 1192, *et seq.*

owner, as no member of the family cared, as a rule, to take up the burden of mortgaged ownership which had come to be looked upon as less desirable than tenancy.⁴⁶ This fall of prices at a time when mortgages were very prevalent was the immediate cause of the rapid decline in landownership on the part of farmers during the twenties, thirties and forties of the nineteenth century.

When this land came upon the market it was usually purchased by greater landlords, merchants, or manufacturers,⁴⁷ who very rarely cared to put it upon the market again; and thus the results

⁴⁶ It is a common saying in England that "The landlord is worse than the landlord."

⁴⁷ Parliamentary Papers, 1833, Vol. V., question 6699, "As these small estates [in the northern counties] are brought to market do small proprietors step in and buy them, or are they absorbed into large properties? Frequently absorbed into large properties, but occasionally bought by men who have realized money in trade or in large farms, and who are withdrawing their capital and . . . and investing it in the purchase of landed property." In Kent, question 6412, these small estates are "generally bought by some one who has an estate adjoining."

Question 2348. "As those small proprietors [in the North Riding of Yorkshire] have sold out, who have become the purchasers? In some measure large proprietors that were adjoining, but chiefly tradesmen and shipowners from Scarborough . . . There is none of it sold to ancient freeholders, it has changed hands completely, and gone to people who are strangers to the neighborhood." In Cheshire, question 6157, these small properties were "absorbed into larger estates or [purchased] by large manufacturers, who have laid out a good deal of money." Again in Wiltshire, question 1270, "They are generally bought by gentlemen who have adjoining estates; there are very few estates now purchased by the yeomanry for occupation." Question 7379, "When they [the small freeholds in Kent, Surrey and Essex] have been sold, by whom have they been bought? I think by persons in trade in the towns, and so on." Question 9208, "Sometimes the yeomen's estates [in Somersetshire] have been bought by other small proprietors, and sometimes by gentlemen of large landed properties." Question 1703, "Who generally bought those estates [in Worcestershire] so sold? Gentlemen in the neighborhood, principally for investment." Question 1704, "Not small capitalists? No, they have never purchased since those high times in 1811 and 1812." Question 2534, "In former years when a freehold was sold there was another freeholder at hand to purchase the property, but now they have to get a purchaser from . . . some trading place." Question 8580, "A great deal has been bought in the Midland Counties by manufacturers; some have been purchased for accommodation by adjoining proprietors, but generally by manufacturers or the great landed proprietors."

A statement made by Mr. Doyle on this subject, in his report to the Royal Commission on Agriculture (Parliamentary Papers, 1881, C.—2778—II.) illustrates the tendency, with respect to the class who were most eager to buy the small estates when they came upon the market, which is in many cases suggested, but for which positive proof seems hard to bring together, yet which most people are ready to admit as the truth. The quotation reads: "Although land yields a return comparatively so inadequate, it is always bound to be in favor as an investment for the ambition and accumulated savings of trade and manufacture. Nor do any class of owners appear to be more eager than are the 'new men' to add acre to acre, or more bent on doing so at any cost." p. 260.

of this temporary depression have been more permanent than we should expect in a country where land ownership on a large scale does not involve so many social advantages, and where systems of primogeniture and entail do not bind the large estates together permanently.

The yeomen farmers were gradually reduced in number,⁴⁸ decade after decade, until by the close of the third quarter of the century they were found only here and there; and tenancy was the rule.⁴⁹ In 1883 John Rae estimated that probably not

"Lavergne: Rural Economy of England, 1855, pp. 113-4. "Formerly there were many small proprietors in England who formed an important class in the state, they were called yeomen, to distinguish them from the landed gentry, who were called squires. These yeomen have almost disappeared but not by any violent revolution. The change has taken place voluntarily and imperceptibly. They have sold their small properties to become farmers, because they found it more profitable; and most of them have succeeded, those remaining will most likely shortly follow the example."

*James Caird: General View of British Agriculture, J. R. A. S. E. [1878], second series, Vol. XIV., Part II., p. 32. "The land of the United Kingdom may be said to be now [1878] almost wholly cultivated by tenant-farmers. The class of yeomen, or small landowners farming their own land, is found here and there in England, but scarcely at all in Scotland, and now bears but small proportion to the whole. Many of the large landowners retain a farm under their own management for home supplies, or for the breeding of selected stock; very few as a matter of business or profit."

A few quotations from the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, as found in the parliamentary papers for the years 1881 and 1882, amplify this statement of Caird's.

"My report," says Mr. Coleman, in speaking of Yorkshire, "is noticeably deficient in any information as to the status and prospect of peasant proprietors, because this class does not exist in Yorkshire; the nearest approach to them is to be found in small freeholders far up the dells, whose position, as far as I could learn, was in many cases a shade worse than occupiers of small holdings." (Parliamentary Papers, 1881, C.—2778.—II., p. 176.)

In his report on Lincolnshire, Mr. Druce says, "There are large numbers . . . of small freeholders in the Isle of Axholme . . . Here the small freeholders appear to have existed for many years. (Parliamentary Papers, 1881, C.—2778.—II., p. 384.) "In the eastern-central, and southern, and eastern parts of the county small freeholders are also numerous. They are to be found south of Boston, in South Holland, notably in Kirton and some other villages in that locality; again west of Boston in Wildmore Fen, and the West Fen, and north of Boston, running quite up to the Humber at a little distance from the sea coast, but not on it, there are also large numbers of them." (Ibid., p. 385.)

In Durham many of the small estates had been absorbed by the large ones. "The yeomen are passing away, generally to the great advantage of the community, as the land in the hands of large proprietors is as a rule better managed and far more productive. I am bound to say," continues Mr. Coleman, "that the inferior and comparatively neglected condition of small freeholds interspersed among some of the larger estates was very apparent, and seemed to indicate that a still further absorption which, in the nature of things, must sooner or later occur, will be beneficial rather than otherwise. Of course in

more than five per cent of the farmers of England owned the land which they cultivated.⁵⁰

making this statement, I do not say there are not notable exceptions; but what I have stated is the general rule." (Ibid., p. 216.)

Mr. Doyle, in commenting upon the improvements in agriculture as in part due to the decline of landownership on the part of the farmers, says: "The class of freeholders, such as the 'statesmen' of the north, or the 'grey coats' farther south, are gradually disappearing through force of a law that is more effective than legislation." (Ibid., p. 260.)

Druce reports on the counties of Essex, Hertford, Huntingdon, Leicester, Norfolk, Northampton, Rutland, and Suffolk, and for these counties the common statement runs, "Peasant proprietors are rare and not more prosperous than the tenant farmers." Or "The number of peasant proprietors is very small. Or "There are hardly any peasant proprietors in the county." (Parliamentary Papers, 1882, C.—3375, pp. 5, 33, 34, 46, 65, 70, 87, 91, 29.) The Fen district of Cambridgeshire is noted as an exception to this rule." (Ibid., p. 14.) And of Hertfordshire he states, "It seems to me that there were proportionately a larger number of yeomen owners, that is to say, of farms 100 to 500 acres in this county than in any other in my district." (Ibid., p. 34.)

⁵⁰John Rae: "Why have the yeomen perished?" Contemporary Review, October, 1883.

CHAPTER V.

THE RECENT DEPRESSION AND THE PRESENT SITUATION.

By 1836 the depression which followed the war had practically ceased and the period from this date until 1875 was, on the whole, an era of great prosperity for English agriculture. The repeal of the corn laws in 1846 wrought no important immediate results. The demand for agricultural produce was so great in England that large quantities had to be supplied from abroad. Some of this necessary supply had to be imported at great expense, hence, the prices of home productions were usually very high. Tenant farmers made much money and lived in a very high style, some of them even afforded liveried coachmen. During this period of prosperity farmers sometimes purchased land. A slight movement in this direction to some extent counteracted the result of the tendency on the part of landowning farmers to alienate their estates.

But by 1875 the foreign wheat supply had become more easily accessible, as well as more abundant; and the depression which followed ruined hundreds of farmers and rendered many of the landlords comparatively poor. There are many phases of this depression which have a peculiar interest to the agricultural economist, but none other could be studied with more profit than the inability of the landlords and the farmers to adjust themselves to the new situation. The depression has now practically passed, not because prices are better, but because a new generation of farmers who are willing and able to adjust themselves to the conditions under which world competition has placed them, have taken the place of those who could not succeed without high prices.

We are interested in this depression because of the effect it had upon the few remaining farmers who owned land. In 1895, the Royal Commission on Agriculture sent assistant commissioners into the various parts of the country to gather information con-

cerning the effects of the agricultural depression. Many of these assistant commissioners did not report upon the landowning farmers, possibly because they found no representatives of this class, but others have given valuable bits of information.

Cumberland still retained some of her "statesmen" in 1895, but the problems of the second quarter of the century were still confronting them.⁵¹ In consequence of the legacies and annuities which eldest sons had to pay on the basis of the high prices which prevailed before the depression of 1875, a great many yeomen farmers were "over head and ears in debt." Not only had prices fallen, but the number of years' purchase at which land could be bought had been reduced. These estates were usually mortgaged, and often so heavily, that the farmer who nominally owned his land had more to pay as interest than the tenant farmers paid as rent. It is said that this class of farmers had been gradually decreasing in numbers for many years. This gradual decline is illustrated in a most interesting manner by the figures available for the parish of Abbey Quarter, which are as follows:

Year.	Number of "statesmen."	Number of leaseholders.	Average size of holdings.
1604.....	68	None.	42 acres.
1648.....	81	6	54 acres.
1780.....	51	9	58 acres.
1812.....	38	18	58 acres.
1837.....	30	20	100 acres.
1864.....	21	29	100 acres.
1894.....	9	41	100 acres.

"There have been three causes for the gradual diminution in numbers of the statesmen," says Mr. Fox. "In the first place, many of them, tempted by the high prices offered for their land by large landowners, have sold. . . . Secondly, a number of them, since the lower prices, have let their land to tenants. But, thirdly, the qualities which are necessary to ensure success on a small holding, and which should be conspicuous both in the owner and his wife, namely, energy and thrift, are not necessarily hereditary qualities . . . and there are cases where land has had to be sold because the mode of life, which was pursued by the father, and accompanied by success, was not acceptable to the son."

⁵¹The Report by Mr. W. Fox, 1895, C.—7915—I., Sect. 51, forms the basis of this paragraph.

In Westmoreland the landowning farmers had gradually disappeared until, in 1895, they were nearly extinct. "However, we may regret the change," to quote Coleman, after Wilson Fox, "it appears to have been inevitable. Land is an expensive luxury, and not a profitable investment. As civilization progressed, and the cost of living increased, returns were not proportionately advanced. The land became gradually burdened with charges, and often suffering in condition, was eventually parted with, going as a rule to swell the larger estates. Nor as regards the public advantage, need such a result be lamented, for it is quite certain that a flourishing tenantry under a liberal and wealthy owner, are far more productive than owners whose means are too straightened to allow of the proper application of capital. Probably the most complete illustration of this change is seen in the Earl of Bective's fine property at Underly, which comprises about 25,000 acres, . . . A large part of this property was formerly owned by small proprietors, mostly statesmen. These men held on as long as possible, and were eaten up by debts and charges, and the soil wretchedly impoverished. The trustees of the late Alderman Thomson, who himself, if I mistake not, sprang from a statesman family, bought up the farms by degrees, and there is still money waiting similar investments. In no case did the investment pay more than two and three-fourths per cent on the purchase money. In many cases the former owners continued as the tenants; and when the land was drained and limed, and proper buildings erected, these men, who were formerly hard up, became well-to-do farmers. . . . The Underly Estate probably yields more than double the produce of which the land was capable when divided and ill-managed."²²

Writing of this same estate, Lefevre gives some additional facts which are very interesting and give clearness to the picture. "This great property . . . was gradually accumulated and purchased under the express direction of the will of a man who, two generations ago, made a large fortune in trade, and whose only daughter married a nobleman. The estate was made up of 226 different purchases, nearly all of them cases where the vendors belonged to the class of yeomen farmers, or statesmen, as

²²Report of Wilson Fox (Assistant Commissioner, Royal Commission of Agriculture), Parliamentary Papers, 1895, C.—7915—I.

they are called in that district, who, themselves and their ancestors, had cultivated their own lands for many generations. Instead then of 226 distinct owners of land, there is now a single owner. It may safely be assumed, in respect of this great property, that, under the existing system of family entail permissible by law, it will for generations to come remain intact in a single ownership."⁵³

Lincolnshire still possessed a large number of small peasant proprietors and some large yeomen farmers, in 1895. Many farmers had bought land during the prosperous times prior to 1875, and had paid double the price for which it would sell after the fall in prices had brought on the depression. A large proportion of the purchase money had frequently been obtained by giving a mortgage on the land, and in some cases the land had fallen in value until it was worth less than the face value of the mortgage. Fox says of these men, "Many . . . have already sunk, overwhelmed by the burden of interest they had to pay."⁵⁴ Mr. Fox devotes several pages to the condition of the small landowning farmers of the southern part of Lincolnshire. Most of these people worked hard and lived poorly. In reading the report one might easily think Mr. Fox was paraphrasing Young's report on the same district, written one hundred years before, were it not for the further evidence of ruin on every hand. In speaking of these small proprietors, Fox says, "The possession of land has been the ruin of hundreds in the past and is a millstone around the neck of hundreds in the present. Not the least regrettable reflection in this sad story is that most of these small owners are the flower of a class, the pick of the foremen and the labourers, who excelled in the performance of their duties, who toiled and saved and denied themselves for years to raise themselves out of one class into another, and who, when they had bought their independence and a new social position, found themselves bound to admit failure, their hard savings gone, their energies wasted, their hopes crushed, to retrace their steps back into the ranks out of which they had stepped, at a time of life when they had expended much of their vitality and all their ambition."⁵⁵

⁵³G. Shaw-Lefevre, M. P.: *Agrarian Tenures*, p. 12.

⁵⁴Fox: Lincolnshire, 1895, C. 7671, §95.

⁵⁵Fox: *Ibid.*, §109.

In Cambridgeshire the depression proved very disastrous to the farmers generally. The landowning farmers, burdened with mortgages, were the first to succumb; and those of this class who remained, in 1895, were in great straits. "In several districts," says Fox, "evidence was privately given me of this, and in one of them a gentleman, who was in the position to know the facts, stated that all the yeoman farmers there . . . were heavily mortgaged."⁵⁶

"We have had a good many yeomen in the County of Norfolk," said Mr. Read before the Commission in 1897, "and I say that they are much the hardest hit of all. They have to bear both the losses of the landlord and the losses of the tenant, and there have been the most disastrous failures. A good many of our farmers were told twenty-five years ago that the best thing that they could do was to buy their farms, and they did so, but they had not enough cash, and they had to mortgage their farms. They have gone to the wall worse by far than the common tenant farmers. There are a good many of our old and most respected yeomen who have disappeared within the last few years. I feel confident that they will almost all of them go unless there is a change for the better."⁵⁷

Speaking of Suffolk, Mr. Everett of the commission said, "We had a great many yeomen farmers and in the intense competition for land in the good times, a great many men took that course of making themselves, as they thought, independent; they bought land and mortgaged it, and I should think three-quarters of that class of men are now stripped of every penny they had."⁵⁸

During the "good times," the farmers of Wiltshire saved money and many of them were able to purchase farms, but as in other places, they borrowed money and their investment proved disastrous. One witness cited four instances within his own knowledge of farmers who bought their farms about 1875. Of these, two had come to grief and absconded, a third had lost his farm, which was in the hands of the mortgagee, while the fourth was still holding his land.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Fox: Report on the County of Cambridge, 1895, C.—7871, §53.

⁵⁷ Parliamentary Papers, 1897, C.—8540, Read, §113.

⁵⁸ Parliamentary Papers, 1897, C.—8540, §113.

⁵⁹ Rew: Parliamentary Papers, 1895, C.—7624, §28.

In speaking of the condition of landowning farmers in general, the final report of the Royal Commission states that "As a rule their properties, whether inherited or purchased by the present proprietors, are charged with mortgages, and the mortgagee makes no remission of the interest due to him. In consequence of the shrinkage in the value of land, the interest on the mortgage has become in many cases a burden, which the owner has been unable to bear, and frequently where the yeoman farmer has succeeded in paying the interest due from him it has been a heavier rent than he would have paid to a landlord."⁶⁰

In 1900, over twenty-one million (21,286,632) acres, or eighty-six and one-tenth per cent of all the land under crops and grasses in England, was occupied by tenant farmers; while about three and one-half million (3,427,158) acres, or thirteen and nine-tenths per cent, was occupied by owners.⁶¹ But of this three and a half million acres no great extent was occupied by yeomen farmers. Indeed, the landowning farmers are at the present time very rare in England. By making close inquiry while passing through more than half of the counties of England in 1899, the writer found a scattering few who owned the land which they cultivated, but such farmers were extremely rare. The greater part of the land designated as "occupied by owners," was composed of the "Home farms" of landlords, and of farms which they had not been able to rent since the depression. In this way the Duke of Grafton occupied five farms besides his home farm, in 1899. The five farms aggregated five thousand four hundred and ninety acres. Each one of these farms, as well as the home farm, had a bailiff upon it. There were more than seventeen thousand (17,189) farm bailiffs in England according to the census of 1891. Tenant farmers who keep bailiffs are very rare. The vast majority of these bailiffs were, doubtless, operating land which is recorded in the Agricultural Returns as "occupied by owners." Between 1871 and 1881 the number of bailiffs increased nearly three thousand (2,889), which may fairly be looked upon as the number of farms which could not be rented, and which the landlords preferred to farm in this way rather than leave the land to

⁶⁰ Parliamentary Papers, 1897, C.—8540, §113.

⁶¹ Parliamentary Papers, 1901 (House of Commons), Vol. LXXXVIII, p. 38.

grow up in weeds. This gives some notion of the extent to which land has been compulsorily cultivated by landlords.⁶²

The Agricultural Returns for 1898 indicate that twenty-five per cent of the farm land of Kent was occupied by owners. In commenting upon this fact Mr. Whitehead says, "Much of this land occupied by owners is farmed by them compulsorily, on account of the failures of tenants and of inability to replace them, and the amount of land thus held by the owners has increased nearly 20 per cent in the last ten years. The small landowners have in most instances been compelled to sell their land, and the yeoman of Kent has practically disappeared."⁶³

To-day practically all the farmers in England lease the land which they occupy. The young man becomes a tenant farmer with the expectation of remaining such all his life. When money has been saved he looks for a larger farm where he may employ his surplus funds, but very rarely does he even think of investing in land. To an American this seems strange, and one may be tempted to say that it is because there is no land on the market; but while there is much land which can not be sold there is always land for sale in England.

The writer has talked with many English farmers upon this subject and has been told on every hand that they can not afford to "lock up their capital in land," they need it all for stocking their farms. And this is not because the farmers are poorer than American farmers but because land has long been worth very much more, and from forty to fifty dollars an acre is required to stock a farm in such a manner as will make it bring profitable returns.⁶⁴ It would not be far wrong to say that, with conditions as they were before 1875, it required as much wealth to stock a

⁶²In 1899, the writer met many estate agents desirous of finding tenant farmers who would rent the farms which were then being farmed by bailiffs, and hence, reported in the *Agricultural Returns* as land cultivated by owners. Between 1895 and 1900 the percentage of the land under crops and grass in England, which was occupied by tenants increased from 85.1 per cent. to 86.1 per cent., which shows that about 1-15 of the land farmed by owners in 1895 was in the hands of tenants in 1900. (Parliamentary Papers, 1896, Vol. XCII., p. 48; 1901, Vol. LXXXVIII., p. 38.

⁶³Sketch of the Agriculture of Kent, J. R. A. S. E., Series III., Vol. X, Part III., page 4 of *Author's reprint*.

⁶⁴This is due partly to the fact that stock and machinery cost more, e. g., eighty dollars is the ordinary price for a milk cow of common stock.

farm in England as it did to own and stock a farm of the same size in most parts of the United States. If the farmer is to own land he must, as a rule, reduce the scale of his operations; for when he invests in both land and stock the farm must be much smaller than if he invests in the stock only and leases the land. This is very undesirable, not because small farms are less profitable, though for some purposes they are, but because investments in land do not yield more than two and one-half or three per cent, while good farmers count on making ten per cent on their investments in stock.

The farmer who would buy land must not only be willing to take a return on his investment much less than he can make by investing it in farming, and even less by two or three per cent than he would have to pay for borrowed money; but the fees and other charges which he must pay for transferring land are so high that they amount to an important per cent of the price of the land. The smaller the purchase the greater, relatively, is this expense. In case of a large estate the cost of making a transfer is comparatively small, but where the purchase money is one thousand pounds or less the charges are enormous. Haskyns⁶⁵ gives a set of tables showing the cost of transferring land. According to those figures the purchaser's average expense, irrespective of the stamp duty, for purchases of one thousand pounds or less in value was about six per cent of the purchase money, and in one case where the sum paid for the land was only one hundred pounds, the purchaser's expense of transfer, aside from the stamp duty, was more than twenty-three per cent. It is claimed that the vendor's expenses were, in every case, much higher.

There has been an agitation in recent years which looks towards the reestablishment of peasant proprietors in England. The Small Holdings Act of 1892⁶⁶ made provisions by which each county council was empowered to acquire land, improve it, and sell it to the small farmers on unusually favorable terms, but this has had no important influence upon the ownership of land by the farming classes.

⁶⁵Systems of Land Tenure, Cobden Club Essays. Essay on England.

⁶⁶55 and 56 Vict. Ch., 31.

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS.⁶⁷

We have seen that two hundred years ago more than half the farmers of England owned the land which they cultivated. To-day, practically all are tenants.

This extinction of the yeomanry took place in some parts of England during the eighteenth century. In some counties this was a result of the "new agriculture" which made inclosures and large farms more profitable than small farms in the common fields. The new agriculture required, also, that more capital be applied upon each acre, and calculating farmers found it profitable to rent as much land as they had the money to stock rather than to lock up their capital by investing it in high priced land. In other counties the yeomen farmers were crowded out by gentlemen farmers—men who, having made money in other pursuits, became farmers because agriculture was the favored pursuit among the wealthy classes of England.

But taking England as a whole there was no marked decline of the yeomanry until the third decade of the nineteenth century. Between 1820 and 1875 the number of landowning farmers was gradually reduced to insignificance. During this period the fact of greater returns on investments in farm stock than in land remained a constant factor. The neighboring landlords and men of wealth generally were still ready to consolidate small estates into large ones. But the condition which led to a rapid decline during this period was the fall in prices. During the Napoleonic wars, when prices were high and rising higher, it was possible to buy land and pay for it out of the profits of farming. It was then

⁶⁷In attempting to summarize the conclusions arrived at in this paper, there is a feeling on the part of the writer that general statements are always more or less inaccurate and it is chiefly for those whose interest in the subject is too general to lead them to read the whole paper that the summary is appended.

the common thing for the more successful farmers to invest their savings in land. As a rule, they purchased more than they could at once pay for and gave a mortgage to secure the payment of the indebtedness thus incurred. It was also common among the yeomanry for one son to succeed to the family patrimony upon the payment of certain sums for the provision of his brothers and sisters. Thus it was that a large proportion of the yeomen farmers were burdened with indebtedness, which the fall in prices made it impossible for them to pay. Some sold their incumbered farms within a few years. Others held out longer but in time they too gave up or died, and their farms were sold.

Farmers rarely invested in land after 1820. The farms were sold to wealthy men who wished to build up family estates. These large estates were valued for the social standing which they confer upon their owners as well as for their returns in the form of rent. They are commonly kept intact by a system of entails so that once the small estates become incorporated into the larger ones, they rarely come into the market again. There is still land for sale in England but the price is so high, compared with the value of produce, the expense of making the transfer so great, and the land-credit system so poor that farmers do not often care to indulge in the luxury of landownership. On the other hand, the relation between landlord and tenant is very satisfactorily arranged, the farmers are, as a rule, contented with the present system, and the fields of England prove that landownership on the part of farmers is not essential to good agriculture.

SOURCES.**

1607. NORDEN, J.
The Surveyor's Dialogue.
- 1657-8. SCOBELL, H.
A Collection of Acts and Ordinances, 1640-1656.
1691. G. M.
The New State of England.
1696. KING, GREGORY.
Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions
upon the State and Condition of England. [This
work was written in 1696 but was not published
until 1802, when George Chalmers had it printed
as an appendix to his "Estimate of the Comparative
Strength of Great Britain"].
1699. DAVENANT, C.
An Essay upon the Probable Methods of Making a
People Gainers in the Balance of Trade.
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1731. TULL, JETHRO.
The New Horse-Hoeing Husbandry: or, A Treatise
on the Principles of Tillage and Vegetation,
wherein is taught a Method of introducing a sort
of Vineyard Culture into the Corn-Fields, in order
to increase their Product and diminish the Common
Expense.
1787. HOWLETT, J.
Enclosures a Cause of Improved Agriculture.

**Given in chronological order except in case of the reports on the several counties of England, which are arranged in the alphabetical order of the counties. Secondary works are not included.

1787. MARSHALL, WILLIAM.
The Rural Economy of Norfolk. 2 Vols.
1788. The Rural Economy of Yorkshire. 2 Vols.
1789. The Rural Economy of Gloucestershire. 2 Vols.
1790. The Rural Economy of the Midland Counties. 2 Vols.
1796. The Rural Economy of the West of England. 2 Vols.
1798. The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties. 2 Vols. [William Marshall made a minute study of the agriculture of various parts of England and published his results in the volumes entitled "Rural Economy," etc., "Comprising the Management of Landed Estates, and the Present Practice of Husbandry." Marshall's work has been too little noticed by economic historians. Marshall was a contemporary of the well-known Arthur Young, and while the latter was the more spirited writer, the former was the more careful student, and wrote systematic treatises which are of far greater value to the student of agrarian history than the more general writings of Arthur Young.]
1794. THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE OF ENGLAND.
Reports on the agriculture of the various counties of England. [These reports are in two forms,—the preliminary and the final form. The preliminary reports were issued as "printed manuscripts," simply. These were quarto reports with large margins on which practical agriculturists, to whom copies were sent, were asked to make corrections and additions. During the next ten or fifteen years the most of these reports were worked over or new reports made by other men, and published in octavo volumes, entitled, Agricultural Surveys. The following table gives the dates and the names of the authors of both of these sets of reports.]

TABLE,¹¹ showing authors and dates of publication of (a) the draft (quarto) reports, and (b) the final (octavo) reports, on the several counties of England.

COUNTY.	(A) DRAFT (QUARTO) REPORT.		(B) FINAL (OCTAVO) REPORT.	
	Author.	Date.	Author.	Date.
Bedford	Thomas Stone	1794	Thos. Batchelor	1808
Berkshire	Wm. Pearce	1794	Wm. Mavor	1808
Buckingham	Wm. James and Jacob Malcolm	1794	Rev. St. J. Priest	1810
Cambridge	Chas. Vancouver	1794	Rev. W. Gooch	1813
Cheshire	Thos. Wedge	1794	Henry Holland	1806
Cornwall	Robt. Fraser	1794	G. B. Worran	1811
Cumberland	John Bailey and George Culley	1794	John Bailey and George Culley	1797
Derby	Thos. Brown	1794	John Farey (3 vols.)	1811-7
Devon	Robt. Fraser	1794	Chas. Vancouver	1806
Dorset	John Claridge	1793	Wm. Stevenson	1812
Durham	Joseph Granger	1794	John Bailey	1810
Essex	Messrs. Griggs	1794	Arth. Young (2 vols.)	1807
Essex	Chas. Vancouver	1795	Thos. Budge	1807
Gloucester	George Turner	1794	Chas. Vancouver	1810
Hampshire	Abr. and Wm. Driver	1794	John Duncumb	1806
Hereford	John Clark	1794	Arthur Young	1804
Hertford	D. Walker	1795	E. Parkinson	1813
Huntingdon	Thos. Stone	1793	John Boys	1796
Kent	John Boys	1794	John Boys	1805
Kent	John Holt	1794	John Holt	1795
Lancashire	John Holt	1794	E. W. Dickson	1814
Lancashire	John Monk	1794	Wm. Pitt	1809
Leicester	Thos. Stone	1794	Arthur Young	1798
Lincoln	Thos. Baird	1793	J. Middleton	1798
Middlesex	Peter Foot	1794	J. Middleton	1807
Middlesex	John Fox	1794	Chas. Hassall	1812
Monmouth	Nathaniel Kent	1794	Nathaniel Kent	1796
Norfolk	Nathaniel Kent	1794	Arthur Young	1804
Norfolk	Nathaniel Kent	1794	W. Pitt	1809
Northampton	Jas. Donaldson	1794	W. Pitt	1809
Northumberland	John Bailey and George Culley	1794	John Bailey and George Culley	1797
Northumberland	John Bailey and George Culley	1794	John Bailey and George Culley (3rd ed.)	1805
Nottingham	Robert Lowe	1794	Robt. Lowe	1798
Oxford	Richard Davis	1794	Arthur Young	1809
Rutland	John Crutchley	1794	E. Parkinson	1808
Shropshire	J. Bishton	1794	Joseph Plymley	1803
Somerset	J. Billingsley	1794	J. Billingsley	1797
Stafford	W. Pitt	1794	W. Pitt	1796
Stafford	W. Pitt	1794	W. Pitt	1813
Suffolk	Arthur Young	1794	Arthur Young	1797
Suffolk	Arthur Young	1794	Arthur Young (3rd ed.)	1804
Surrey	Wm. James and Jacob Malcolm	1794	Wm. Stevenson	1809
Sussex	Rev. A. Young	1793	Rev. A. Young	1808
Warwick	John Wedge	1794	Adam Murray	1813
Westmoreland	Andrew Fringle	1794	Andrew Fringle	1797
Westmoreland	Andrew Fringle	1794	Andrew Fringle (3rd ed.)	1813
Wiltshire	Thomas Davis, Sen.	1794	Thos. Davis, Jun.	1811
Worcester	W. T. Pomeroy	1794	W. Pitt	1810
Yorks, N. Riding	Mr. J. Tuke, Jun.	1794	John Tuke	1800
Yorks, E. Riding	Isaac Latham	1794	H. E. Strickland	1812
Yorks, W. Riding	Benjie, Brown, and Shirreff	1794	Robert Brown	1799

¹¹ After Sir E. Clarke, Journal of the Royal Agr. Soc., Eng., series III., vol. IX.

1800. YOUNG, A.
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1803. HUNTER, A.
Georgical Essays, 6 Volumes.
1823. CLEGHARN.
An Essay on the Depressed State of Agriculture.
1831. LOUDON, J. C.
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A History of Prices and of the State of the Circulation from 1793 to 1837.
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1855. LAVERGNE, L.
The Rural Economy of England, Scotland, and Ireland.
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The Farmer at Home; The Labourer's Daily Life; Field-faring Women; An English Homestead; and John Smith's Shanty. [These five papers appeared in Fraser's Magazine in 1874, and have in recent years been published in one volume entitled "The Toilers of the Field."]
1878. CAIRD, J.
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